

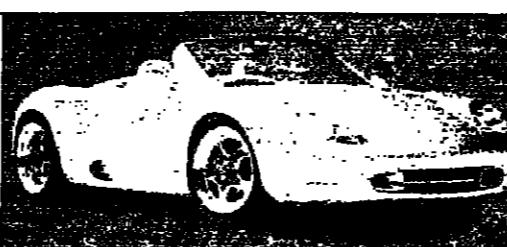
£40,000 to be won
22
Beaten
Coltart
backed
to win
Goff



Arthur plots to
strike again

On the stump with Scargill

Section Two



Win a
Porsche
Boxster

Token, page 10

Bridget
Jones's
Diary

Section Two, page 4

Your money:
new section
starts today

Section Two

One in four homebuyers in debt trap

Negative equity blow to Tories

NICK CICUTTI
and JOHN RENTOL

A record quarter of all homebuyers are caught in the negative equity trap or are on the brink of it, a survey by a leading building society revealed yesterday.

Up to 1.7 million households have negative equity, and a further million borrowers own homes whose value hovers no more than £3,500 above their mortgage, according to Nationwide Building Society.

The new figures represent a setback for the Government, after the Prime Minister, John Major, put himself at the head of a drive to persuade voters that the economic outlook for this year was improving. Ministers have repeatedly pointed to the rise in real incomes, maturing Tessa accounts and signs of recovery in the housing market as the basis of their optimism about political recovery.

But the Nationwide survey raises doubts over whether millions of homeowners can be persuaded of the elusive "feelgood factor" with a general election little more than 15 months away.

Nick Raynsford, Labour's housing spokesman, said: "Negative equity has a very damaging impact on confidence in the housing market, which shows no sign of recovering, despite all the hype we've heard from people with a vested interest – principally the Government."

Nationwide said that about 150,000 households plunged into negative equity after last year's collapse in house prices, affecting one in seven of all borrowers. The additional one million only just above that level is also critical, many housing experts believe.

The costs of moving home, including stamp duty, legal fees and estate agents' commission

means the next step on the housing ladder would leave buyers in the red.

If house prices rise by 3 per cent during 1996, as predicted, more than 300,000 households will be lifted out of negative equity. Borrowers above that line would also gain from any price increase.

But that would still leave a vast reservoir of millions of

disillusioned homeowners trapped in their homes almost a decade after rushing to join the property boom of the late 1980s.

A spokeswoman for Shelter, the housing campaign group, said: "People who have negative equity are often also people who have problems with mortgage arrears."

"If you are living in a home that is worth less than your mortgage, you are less able to move, especially if you are also unemployed. The traditional tactic of trading down become much more difficult."

The society said that while the number of negative equity cases rose overall, the total value of those suffering from it fell slightly from £8.6bn to £8.3bn, reducing the average shortfall to £4,900 from £5,600.

Flotation windfall, page 17

Hopes for a negotiated deal to make progress on the Northern Ireland peace process rose last night after 90 minutes of talks between the Prime Minister and John Hume, the leader of the nationalist SDLP.

Mr Hume made it clear that he had not dropped his opposition to the Prime Minister's plan for all-party elections in Northern Ireland to overcome the IRA's refusal to begin disarming. But he said the two were now "engaged in a process" of negotiations, to find a way round the deadlock.

The SDLP leader said more talks with John Major were planned soon. "Our views were stated very clearly but we are not going to repeat them because everyone knows what they are. We are engaged in a process with the Prime Minister which we hope will lead to a common approach to a comprehensive peace settlement."

Two days ago, Mr Hume said the SDLP "will have nothing to do with elections, full stop". In Belfast, the Sinn Fein president, Gerry Adams, told the Northern Ireland Secretary, Sir Patrick Mayhew, that his party remained implacably opposed to elections. He declared:

"There will be no return to Stormont. We are not going back to be treated the way we were treated since this state was established."

Sir Patrick said after the meeting that the Government envisaged an elected body which would select representatives for a negotiating body. He insisted the Government would not retract its election plan.

While the hectic round of meetings continued, a prominent republican activist was shot dead in west Belfast, in what looked ominously like the start of a feud within the small but ferocious Irish National Liberation Army.

Eye-witnesses said the gunman then coolly walked out of the dole office. He was said to have worn a woollen hat, a wig with a pony tail, glasses and a moustache.

Gallagher, who was in his 30s, was a long-time INLA member who had been jailed several times and was a spokesman for the organisation's military wing.

In that capacity he was last year photographed shaking hands with a Northern Ireland Office minister, Michael Ancram. He was at the head of an INLA faction opposed to the peace process. He took over as chief of staff several months ago.

Leading article, page 14

IN BRIEF

Triple murder trial
A serial killer was indulging his passion for murdering boys, a Leeds court heard. Page 3

Ecstasy campaign

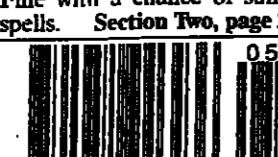
"Chill out rooms" and medical staff may become obligatory at raves as part of a plan to reduce ecstasy-related deaths. Page 4

Yeltsin 'courting extremist'

Boris Yeltsin is said to be courting ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky as part of his campaign for re-election. Page 9

Today's weather

Fine with a chance of sunny spells. Section Two, page 25



BBC snatch Olympic rights from Murdoch

MATTHEW HORSMAN
Media Editor

The BBC and 40 Continental broadcasters yesterday clinched exclusive European rights to broadcast the five Olympic Games between 2000 and 2008 for \$1.44bn, nosing out a \$2bn financial bid from Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation.

Yesterday's announcement by the International Olympic Committee was greeted with exhilaration at the BBC, which had campaigned to halt the flood of major sporting events from free to subscription television.

The IOC was "no doubt placed under pressure by more lucrative alternative offers", said in a statement that the

company "respects the right of any sports body to select the broadcaster of its choice".

The winning bid was 25 per cent higher than the EBU's opening shot, following revelations of Mr Murdoch's bid. A News Corporation insider said:

"This shows that public broadcasters can come up with more money when they are pushed."

The BBC, along with other media companies, have complained that Mr Murdoch's near-monopoly on sport rights in the UK made it impossible for mainstream broadcasters to compete. BSkyB, the satellite broadcaster owned 40 per cent by News Corporation, has exclusive contracts to Premier-



Rupert Murdoch: Beaten to Olympic coverage by BBC

ship football, golf's Ryder Cup and other major sport.

Pressure has been building on politicians to amend the Broadcasting Bill to protect certain "listed" events from being broadcast exclusively on pay-TV, as we stopped running. To minimise legal complications, they

news, page 14

The privatised train at platform one is a bus

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR

Britain's first privatised train for 50 years, due to run this Sunday, will be a bus. In a situation familiar to weekend travellers, engineering works have forced Great Western Trains to operate a replacement bus service on the route from Paddington to Cardiff.

Department of Transport officials have been desperately trying to find a time to transfer the first three passenger rail franchises to the private sector and have decided on 2am this Sunday when the late night trains will continue their journey to Cardiff on the 5.30am to Paddington. By that time the

first privatised train passengers (as opposed to bus passengers) will have left Twickenham station at 5.30am on the South West Trains service to Waterloo.

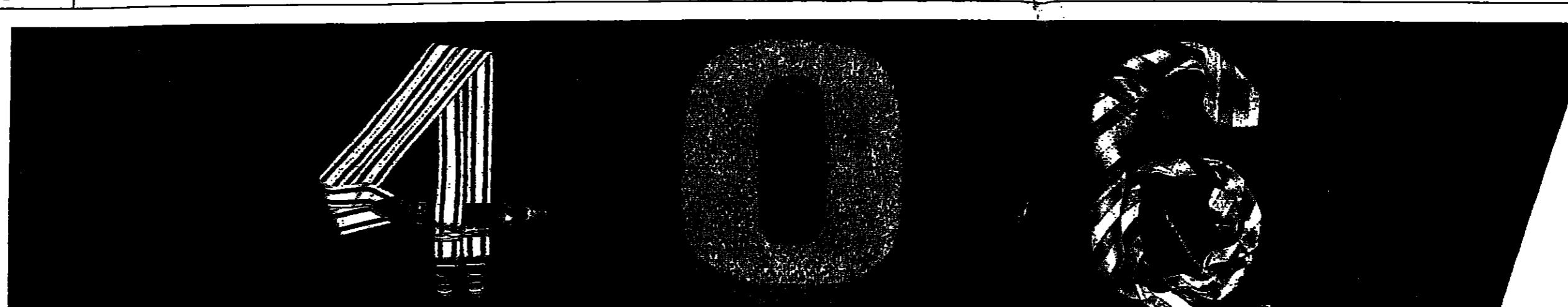
The Department of Transport spokesman said: "Provided the franchise transfers do go ahead, the 5.30am service from Twickenham will be the first privatised service to start as a train and end as a bus."

The big day will be a continued source of embarrassment for Great Western because it is also having to run bus services from its headquarters at Swindon to Reading all day on Sunday as a result of engineering works.

section ONE BUSINESS 16-18 COMMENT 14,15 CROSSWORD 24 GAZETTE 12 LAW REPORT 12 LEADING ARTICLES 14 LETTERS 14 OBITUARIES 12 SHARES 19 SPORT 21-24 UNIT TRUSTS 20

section TWO

ARTS 5-6 BRIDGET JONES 4 CHESS 26 CROSSWORD 26 FINANCE & LAW 12-21 LISTINGS 24-25 MONEY 8-11 THEATRE 6,7 TRAVEL 22 TV & RADIO 27,28 WEATHER 25



news

Ban on work of 'adult' cartoonist is overturned



JOHN MCKIE

A small London comics firm yesterday overturned a Customs and Excise ban on a work from celebrated adult cartoonist Robert Crumb.

Uxbridge magistrates' court yesterday upheld the right of Knockabout Comics, based in Portobello Road, London, to sell Crumb's *My Troubles with Women*. The other banned import, a collection of feminist adult cartoons called *Twisted Sisters*, will also now be available

to buy here. A Customs and Excise officer had banned the books from being imported into Britain or Europe by Knockabout Comics in January last year. The officer had taken offence to depictions of oral sex in each book.

Uxbridge magistrates yesterday rescinded that ban and awarded legal costs of £6,000 to Knockabout Comics. Geoffrey Robertson QC, representing the publishers, celebrated the decision as a victory for freedom of information, and said: "This

customs decision would have put at risk all the underground art of the sixties and we were very happy to put a stop to any such trend."

In his address to the magistrates, Mr Robertson invoked memories of other censorship trials, mentioning the censored novels *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *Last Exit to Brooklyn*.

Knockabout Comics had argued that they had been given written permission from customs to import *My Troubles with Women* from 1988, and

that the pictures offensive to the customs official were only two from two-hundred page books. They added that the books, far from being pornographic, depicted sex in a decidedly unglamorous light.

This view was endorsed in court by Dr William Thompson, a criminologist at Reading University and author of three books on pornography. "I have never seen anything like these pictures in mainstream record and book chains, like Virgin, HMV and Waterstone's."

The creator of *Fritz the Cat*, Robert Crumb was last year the

subject of a critically acclaimed film, *Crumb*, directed by Terry Zwigoff. But Andrew Bird, representing Customs and Excise, argued that the books were "of adult subject matter, sold only to adults". The recent boom in adult comics, however, has meant that distribution has spread from specialist comic shops like Mr Bennett's to mainstream record and book chains, like Virgin, HMV and Waterstone's.

The customs officer who impounded both works, Mark Marin, gave a terse "No comment", yesterday. He also refused to take the stand, in spite of pleas from Mr Robertson.

IN BRIEF

Boy, 11, arrested on drug charges

An 11-year-old boy has been arrested on suspicion of supplying the drug amphetamine at school, police said yesterday.

The boy, alleged to have passed a white powder wrapped in a piece of paper to other boys at a secondary school in Kirkby, Merseyside, claiming it was "speed" or amphetamine, has been temporarily excluded from school while forensic scientists analyse the substance.

A spokesman for Merseyside Police said last night: "He has been given police bail pending further inquiries."

Bullion smuggler

A jeweller said to have been involved in a £20m gold smuggling operation with a female police constable was found guilty of conspiracy to evade VAT on imported bullion. Surinder Kumar, 32, of Streetley, West Midlands, faces up to seven years in jail. The jury at Knightsbridge Crown Court in London has still to return a verdict against Lucie Gilmore, 25, of Bridgnorth, Shropshire.

Electricity pay-outs

Nearly 4,000 customers blacked out by last week's power cuts in Mid Glamorgan and Gwent are to receive between £40 and £200 compensation from South Wales Electricity.

Part-time wages fall

Part-time workers hourly pay has fallen since Wages Councils were abolished in 1993, a new report from the West Midlands Low Pay Unit shows. Wages of part-timers in restaurants fell by 2.2 per cent in the year to last April and by 1.4 per cent for those in pubs and clubs.

Claire Hood killing

A local man, 19, charged with the rape and murder of Claire Hood, 15, whose body was found in woods near her home in St Mellons, Cardiff, last January will appear before Cardiff magistrates today.

Meningitis in school

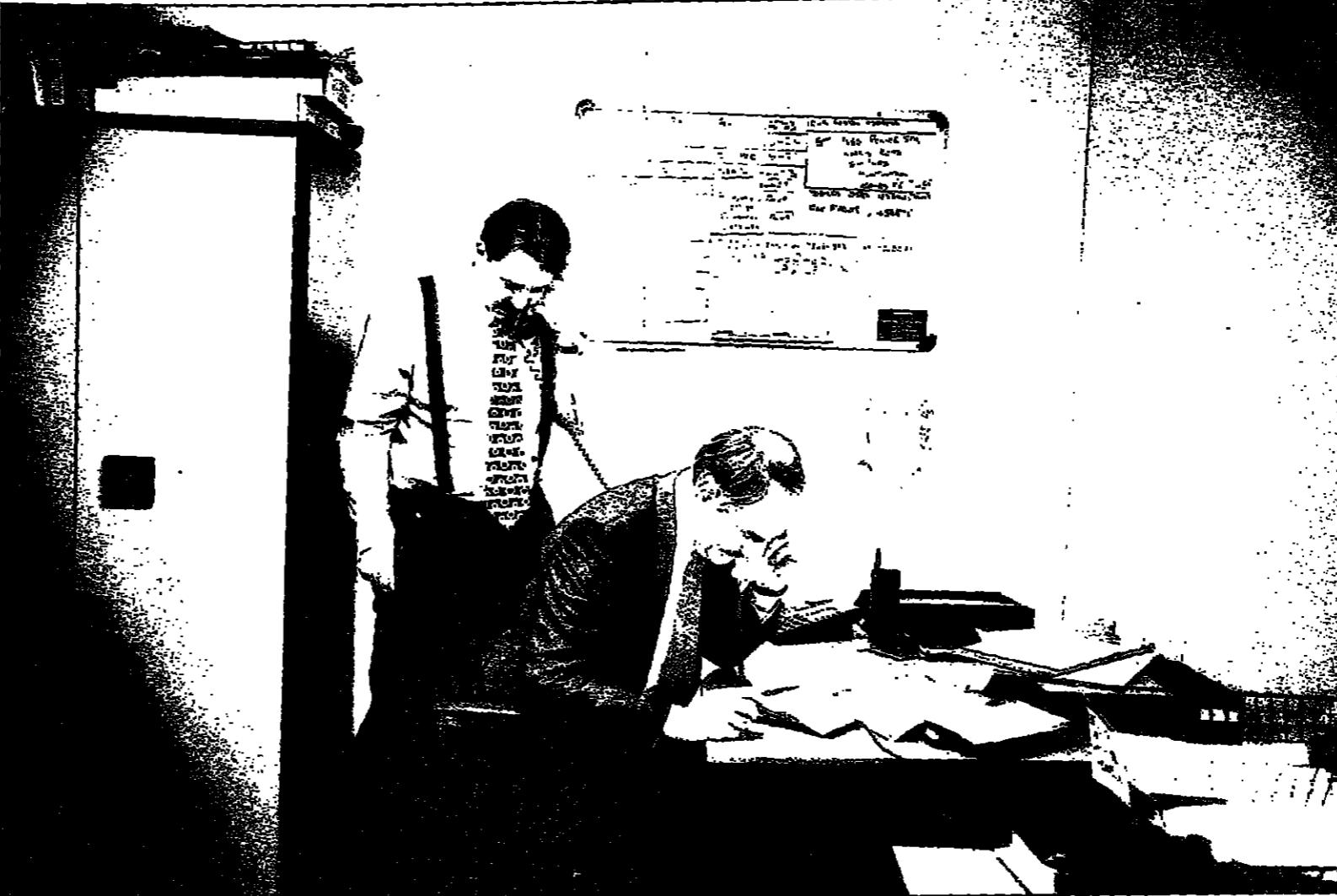
Pupils and staff at Barnwell primary school at Penshaw, Sunderland, were being vaccinated against meningitis after five pupils became ill. Two girls, five and six, were confirmed as having the rare "C" type meningococcal bacteria. Tests were continuing on the other three.

MPs' pay campaign

A cross-party campaign to increase MPs' pay began in earnest as more than a third of the Commons signed a motion urging Lord Nolan's Committee on Standards in Public Life to make recommendations by the end of April.

Pensions for young

A £750,000 advertising campaign by the Government, warning the young that they may not have the standard of living they want if they rely on the state pension alone, was launched in the Central television area and could go national.



Manning the phones: The incident room at St Ives police station, Cambridgeshire, where a drawing of the attacker adorns the wall. Photograph: Brian Harris

Detectives intensify hunt for stalker

JOJO MOYES and JASON BENNETTO

The Home Office is considering new anti-stalking laws, it emerged yesterday. The move comes as detectives hunting a stalker who raped a woman in her home while she was under police protection announced they were investigating more than 80 new leads.

Since last year officials from the Home Office have been examining possible ways of toughening up Britain's existing laws on stalking. As part of the study they are looking at the laws in the United States, Canada, and Australia. They have also been

in discussion with British police forces. A Home Office spokeswoman said: "We are looking to see what we can learn from abroad, we have also been talking to the police and other interested groups."

In the US, the laws on stalking vary greatly from state to state. In California, the maximum fine is one year or \$1,000, which is increased to four years maximum if a court order has been made or if it is a second offence. In some states, the prosecution does not have to prove criminal intent, it just has to show that a reasonable person would view the behaviour of the accused as threatening.

In Britain, police powers are limited. Under the Criminal Justice Act, it is an offence to cause "intentional harassment".

Meanwhile women in Huntingdon, close to where the latest incident of stalking in Britain took place, criticised the police response as "too little, too late". Some expressed concern for their safety and claimed not enough was being done to protect the victim as stalking was seen as "a woman's problem".

Cambridgeshire police said yesterday they had received a number of calls from people who thought they knew the identity of the man who attacked the mother-of-three af-

ter stalking her for four months. He had already accused her twice before raping her in a "depraved and violent" ordeal two weeks ago. "We are still considering him to be a very dangerous man and we don't know if he has attacked before or whether he will attack again," said a spokeswoman yesterday.

As the victim continued to give evidence to police yesterday, they again defended their use of technical equipment to protect her rather than providing a physical guard.

"The only people who know the full circumstances concerning this incident are the woman and the police," said the spokeswoman, adding that the victim "had not complained" about the assistance she received from the police.

Ruth Hall, a spokeswoman for Women Against Rape, a lobby group which offers support to women under threat, said the victim, who is understood to live just outside Huntingdon, was not the first to be attacked while under police protection.

Police usually provide victims with advice on security and a panic button connected to their local police station. She added: "There has to be changes in the priority given to women's safety and the protection that is offered."

THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

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Belgium	... £5.00	Italy	... £4.500
Cambodia	... £6.50	Madagascar	... £5.25
Cyprus	... £12.50	Malta	... 43 cents
Denmark	... Dkr10	Norway	... Nkr20
Irish Rep.	... £5.00	Portugal	... £5.25
France	... Fr14	Spain	... Pts300
Germany	... DM4.5	Sweden	... Skr10
Greece	... Dr4.00	Switzerland	... SF4.00
Lithuania	... Ltr10	USA	... \$3.00

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News analysis, page 13

'Murder in paradise' trial opens

BOB GRAHAM
Antigua

Four people aboard a British-owned racing yacht were tortured and killed for cash they did not have when they anchored overnight on the Caribbean island of Barbuda.

The four — two Britons and two Americans — were bound, gagged, stabbed and blotted with a shotgun, a court was told yesterday, the victims of three young West Indians who believed the 65ft racing ketch, the *Computer Centre Challenger*, carried a substantial amount of money on board.

But the reality was the yacht

carried little cash or items of value, Rex Mackay QC, for the prosecution, told the High Court of Antigua at the opening of the trial in St John's.

Three men from Barbuda are charged with the murders of Ian Chidlow and Thomas Williams, both British yachting enthusiasts.

The three accused were arrested after a four-week inquiry by Scotland Yard detectives were called in to investigate the killings.

Initially, local police believed the deaths were part of an international drugs smuggling ring. But a detailed investigation, led by Detective Superintendent Michael Lawrence, of the Yard's International and Organised Crime

department, uncovered the first alleged murders on Barbuda in more than half a century.

The Yard team had been working in Antigua at the time of the killing of the former head of Customs and Excise. They were immediately transferred to Barbuda.

The beautiful sun-kissed island, 27-miles north of Antigua, is home to less than 1,600 people, the majority of them living in poverty. It is an island known in the West Indies as "the pink paradise" because of its miles of unspoiled beaches, pink from the constant crushing of the coral off its shores.

The trial continues.

COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

Deformities among the children of Gulf war veterans are to be studied as part of a full-scale review by the Ministry of Defence, to establish whether there are links between illnesses and service in the Gulf.

The study marks a partial victory for about 500 veterans of the Gulf war taking legal action against the MoD to secure compensation for illnesses. Specialists will try to establish whether there is a higher than normal incidence of illness among Gulf war veterans and deformities in their children.

About 350 veterans have been screened so far, but most work will be done through statistical checks. Cases of children with abnormalities will be collated. Professor Sir Colin Berry, a specialist in birth defects at the Royal London Hospital, said 350 to 375 babies would be expected to be born with abnormalities out of the 15,000 births likely from the 51,000 troops who served in the Gulf.

The study of abnormalities would try to establish whether the incidence of abnormalities was higher than expected, and whether there were proven links to chemical agents used in the Gulf.

Surgeon General vice-admiral Tony Revell said: "We are continuing this work not only for the veterans who are ill but also to reassure ourselves that if we have to go to war again our people will continue to be properly and safely protected."

He said there was no evidence of a "syndrome", but the MoD accepted that some veterans were ill. "I would prefer to call it Persian Gulf illness, as the Americans do," he said.

The MoD has refused to accept veterans' claims that they were made ill by drugs they took to protect them from chemical weapons in the Gulf war.

News analysis, page 13

MoD to study Gulf illness

**GOOD MORNING
MINISTER, THIS IS YOUR
WAKE-UP CALL.**

"Injudicious! Saying the Chancellor ought to be sacked. That's fairly injudicious I suppose."
"Look, I'm a moderate man, I chose my word 'injudicious' with care, but anyone who says Ken Clarke should be sacked is frankly barking. Now is that better?"
"That's much better."

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4 news

Rave clubs back moves to reduce ecstasy deaths

JOHN ARLIDGE
Scotland Correspondent

Radical new government proposals to improve safety at raves and reduce the growing number of ecstasy-related deaths were welcomed yesterday by nightclub owners, doctors and lawyers.

Prosecution authorities and club owners told a Commons select committee that proposals to introduce licences forcing rave organisers to introduce "chill-out" areas for dances and to employ paramedics would help reduce the death toll. The committee, meeting in Ayr where three youngsters died after taking ecstasy at the Hanger 13 nightclub, was told that "model rave licences" should be introduced throughout the UK.

MPs on the Scottish Affairs Committee were taking evidence on the Licensing Bill, which ministers introduced after the deaths at Hanger 13. The proposed legislation, which de-

fines a rave as "dancing to an emission of repetitive beats", gives the Scottish Office new powers to draw up model licences regulating all rave venues north of the border. The pilot scheme enjoys cross-party support and, if it proves successful, will be introduced in England and Wales.

The licences will enable Scottish local authorities to impose tough new safety conditions on rave clubs. Organisers will be required to provide "chill-out" areas with freely available water to prevent dancers dehydrating; stewards will be forced to search all ravers thoroughly and paramedics must be on hand to treat anyone who falls ill.

With the number of ecstasy-related deaths topping 50 for the first time last year, club owners believe the new licences will help prevent further fatal overdoses. Fraser MacIntyre, manager of Hanger 13, described the Bill as "the way ahead".

Mr MacIntyre added that al-

Teenage drug abusers 'being failed by system'

GLENDA COOPER

Teenagers who run into trouble with drugs are being abandoned by health chiefs, according to a report by the NHS Health Advisory Service.

Current services present a "gloomy picture" where there is a lack of knowledge of the scale of the problem and shortage of specialist treatments for those most at risk.

Drug use is now so widespread among teenagers that such behaviour cannot be seen as abnormal, according to Keith Hellawell, the Chief Constable of West Yorkshire, who helped launch the report, *The Substance of Young Needs*. He said that if present trends continue, 80 per cent of 10-year-

olds will have been involved in drugs in some way by 2005.

Home Office figures show the number of notified drug addicts under 21 increased from 1,501 in 1990 to 2,231 in 1993.

The study says there is a lack of recognition by health professionals of teenagers' needs. Services are poorly planned and co-ordinated - developing in an "isolated, uneven, patchy and idiosyncratic manner".

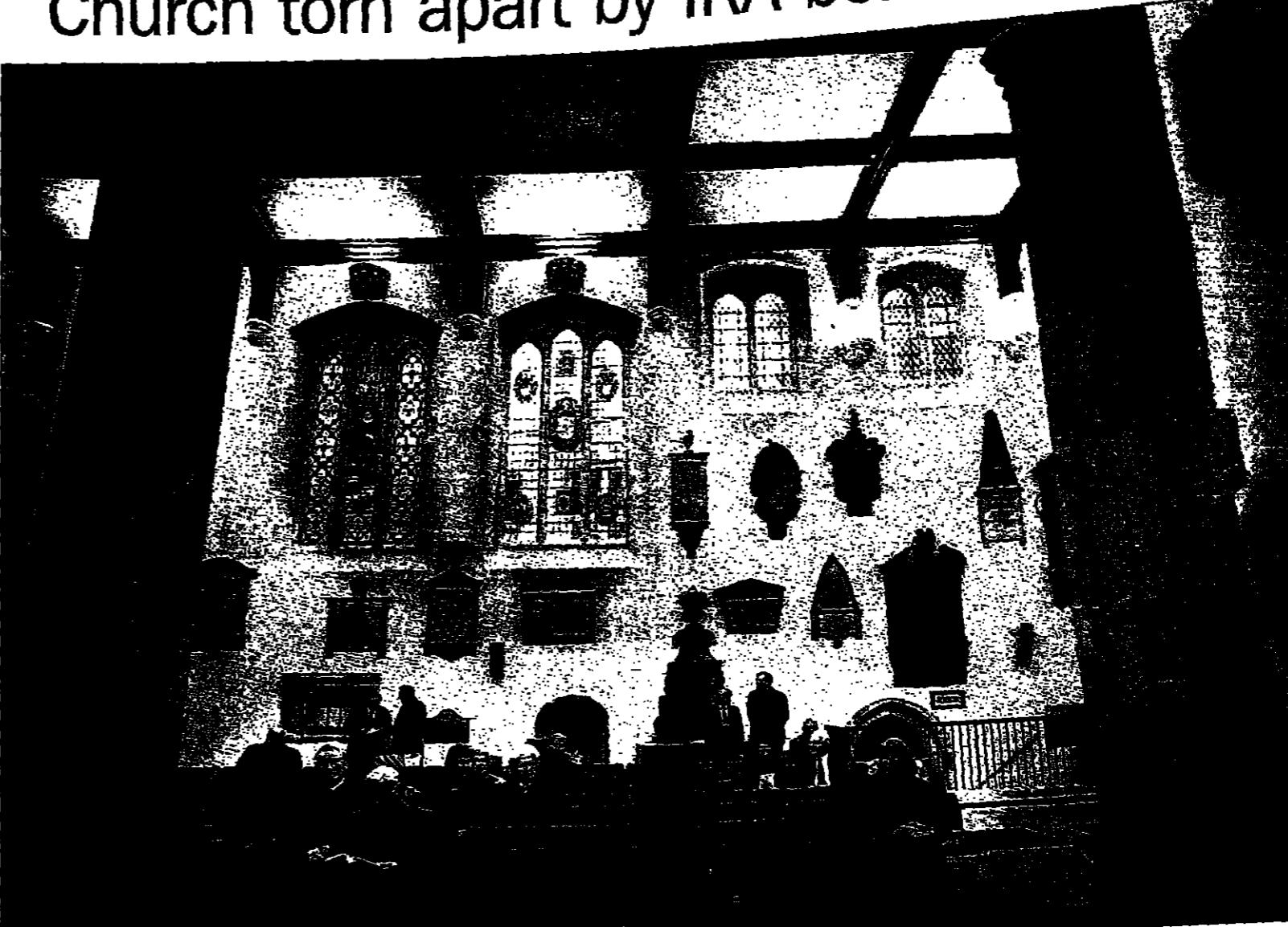
Specialised treatment is extremely limited because of a range of factors including lack of understanding of the problem, lack of basic information about services and disputes over funding. Staff are said to have little knowledge or formal training about issues of confidentiality or consent.

The report by the NHS Health Advisory Service, a non-departmental public body, makes a clear distinction between experimental use of drugs and addiction.

While the service does not support legalisation of drugs, it also says that experimentation alone cannot be seen as indicative of personal disorders. Misuse is defined as use that is harmful, dependent use or the use of substances as part of a wider spectrum of problematic or harmful behaviour.

The report warns: "Given the fragmentary and, in some areas, non-existence of services for young people... there are considerable challenges to be overcome before there will be appropriate provision."

Church torn apart by IRA bomb reopens



Homecoming: Worshippers in St Helen's in the City of London yesterday for the first time since the IRA bombing in 1992. Photograph: John Voss

ROS WYNNE-JONES

The congregation of St Helen's Bishopsgate at last returned to its home in the heart of London yesterday as the church, torn apart by the IRA bomb that wrecked the Baltic Exchange in 1992, was formally reopened.

The largest congregation in the City has twice suffered the

effects of IRA attacks: after St Helen's east windows were blown out and the centre of the church destroyed, they moved to nearby St Botolph's, only to have their adopted place of worship hit by a second IRA bomb, which caused further damage to St Helen's.

The £3.5m renovation was paid for by insurance money and

gifts from the congregation, which includes City workers attending the resumed Tuesday lunchtime services. The Georgian interior, which unites three sections of the medieval church, belies the destruction done by the bombings, when parishioners watched grey-blue glass from the City's skyscrapers shatter St Helen's like snow.

More than 1,000 people attended the reopening ceremony and remembered the four people killed in the two bombings. The outgoing Bishop of London, David Hope, said in a written message that "God is working to draw out good from evil, to raise up the ruined places... and St. Helen's is no exception."

But the rector of St Helen's, Prebendary Dick Lucas, told the congregation he held little hope for human nature. He had earlier told a press conference: "I'm not a man of very much hope either for the state of the world or for Northern Ireland." Asked whether he forgave the bombers, he said: "I'm not aware that any one has asked for forgiveness."

Court usher's son served on six juries

STEPHEN WARD
Legal Affairs Correspondent

At least five more cases heard by a "professional juror" were being reconsidered by court officials yesterday after the Court of Appeal freed a man he had helped convict of burglary.

The juror was called in repeatedly by his father, a senior usher at Stoke Crown Court, to make up the numbers.

Last night the Court Service, which was given agency status by the Lord Chancellor's Department last year, was checking the records of other trials where the juror was co-opted.

The defendant, Frederick Salt, 25, who had served 13 months, will be entitled to claim compensation for wrongful imprisonment. His convictions for burglary and assaulting a policeman were quashed because

the usher's son, who had served several times, would be likely to be an expert who would influence other jurors.

Details of other cases heard by the juror have not been made public, but according to a source at the Lord Chancellor's office the Court Service was planning to tell any defendants convicted by the "professional juror". They would be able to seek leave to appeal, and

the Court of Appeal might free them or order a retrial. If freed they would be able to claim compensation.

Mr Salt was represented by Antony Longworth, who said the juror was summoned to attend court after it was realised they were one short of a jury panel in June last year.

Lord Justice Stagnart refused an application for a retrial on the grounds that it was not in the public interest.

Water firm faces inquiry over second illness outbreak

NICHOLAS SCHOON
Environment Correspondent

The Government's Drinking Water Inspectorate is to investigate South West Water after contamination at a major treatment works last summer caused nearly 600 people to fall ill.

It is the second time in the past few years that the Littlehempston Treatment Works, serving more than 300,000 residents and summer visitors in south Devon, has been linked with a sickness and diarrhoea outbreak caused by the microsporidian parasite cryptosporidium.

An official report into the incident, which occurred at the height of the holiday season, was published yesterday.

South West Water also announced that Bill Fraser, its managing director since privatisation, is to leave at the end of next month. But a spokesman

said that there was "absolutely no connection" between his departure from the water company and the publication of yesterday's report. However, Mr Fraser, whose salary has

risen rapidly to £164,000 a year, will remain a paid consultant for the company for a year with an undisclosed fee.

In yesterday's report the "outbreak control team" - a group of public health officials, local council officers and water company managers - put the blame squarely on the Littlehempston works, but failed to establish how the parasite got into the treated water in the first place.

There are growing concerns about cryptosporidium, which can live in the guts of farm animals as well as man and is widespread in the environment. It is extremely hardy and, being about 10 times the size of a bacterium, is small enough to get through extremely fine filters. It can cause weeks of painful gut illness and once an outbreak occurs it can spread from person to person directly.

Earlier this month, Yorkshire Water went on "red alert" after the parasite was found in the treated water at one of its largest works - the Elvington plant which supplies Sheffield, Rotherham and Barnsley. But it was found at very low concentrations and there were no reported cases of sickness.

There have been several outbreaks linked to tap water in the past few years, but the Drinking Water Inspectorate has not yet taken any water company to court. Yesterday a spokeswoman said prosecuting South West Water was a possibility.

Following the outbreak, the control team told local residents to boil water for 26 days. The company paid £15 compensation to all households in the area, which cost more than £1m, but some individuals and companies are seeking further compensation.

Chinook pilot's disaster theory

The RAF's official explanation for the 1994 Mull of Kintyre helicopter disaster led to a sense of "injustice" throughout the air force, an inquiry heard yesterday.

The claim was made by a Chinook pilot who put forward his own theory about the disaster: a temporary control jam which put the helicopter on a fatal collision course with the Mull. He told the inquiry the RAF board of inquiry's explanation - a wrong rate of climb - had been largely based on "speculation and conjecture".

Top-ranking officers had then based on this a judgment of "gross negligence" on the two pilots involved. Flight Lieutenant Jonathan Tipper and Richard Cook.

The Chinook pilot said that he believed an explanation could be a temporary 20-second control jam, perhaps caused by one or more loose articles interfering with the controls, with the crew regaining control but too late. The pilot said he was putting forward his theory not as the likeliest cause, but as a possible one.

It could not be dismissed, but was extremely unlikely. He repeated his own view of the likeliest cause - that the crew put the Chinook into a high-speed climbing climb too shallow to clear the Mull. They began the climb at a point where they thought they were further away from the Mull, and slightly further to the right of it than they were, he said.

The inquiry yesterday entered its closing stages. It will resume on Thursday, when closing submissions will be heard from lawyers.

The disaster, on 2 June 1994, wiped out the elite of Ulster's intelligence experts.

The Chinook pilot said that he believed an explanation could be a temporary 20-second control jam, perhaps caused by one or more loose articles interfering with the controls, with the crew regaining control but too late. The pilot said he was putting forward his theory not as the likeliest cause, but as a possible one.

The assertion by the Chinook pilot, who cannot be named for security reasons, led to the recall to the witness box today of the wing commander who acted as president of the board of inquiry. He said the pilot's alternative theory was a possibil-

Seaweed yields 'superbugs' clue

TOM WILKIE
Science Editor

Beachcombing biologists have discovered a powerful new antibiotic that will fight diseases caused by "superbugs" which are immune to other antibiotics.

Researchers from Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh discovered that the antibiotic is produced by microbes growing on seaweed on the shores of the Firth of Forth at north Berwick.

It is particularly effective against the MRSA bacteria - methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. Deaths from MRSA infection have been soaring over the past decade as the bacterium is prevalent in hospitals and is unharmed not only by penicillin, but by almost all other antibiotics.

The pharmaceutical industry has been unwilling, however, to take up the Heriot-Watt findings and provide the biologists with financial support to continue their work, according to Professor Brian Austin, head of bi-

ological sciences at the university. The industry is unused to dealing with marine micro-organisms rather than the ones derived from soils to which they are accustomed.

Antibiotics kill bacteria and some of the most effective ones are produced by other bacteria - to kill off their neighbours in the competition for a food resource. It has been standard practice, for years, for researchers seeking new drugs to do the equivalent of going out of the laboratory, taking a spadeful of soil from the flowerbed across the road and sifting through the millions of bacteria it contains to see if any of them might have a medicinal use.

Professor Austin said their discovery carried the message "that the sea seems to offer potential for the next generation". But he warned: "If today someone decided to commercialise it, it would take years and literally millions of pounds before it could be available in the clinics."

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news

Educational standards: System for monitoring independent sector criticised as far-flung outpost fights for survival

Inspections of private schools 'hide failings'

JUDITH JUDD
Education Editor

Inspections of private schools are an exercise in mutual back-slapping and conceal bad schools from parents, according to a report published today.

The report from Miles Douse, an international educational consultant and former independent school head, says private schools should be inspected in the same way as state schools.

At present, he says, private schools where classes are out of control and bullying rampant can get a clean bill of health from inspectors. Schools organise their own inspections independently of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) which supervises state school inspections.

Mr Douse's report, commissioned by CBT Education Services, the largest private contractor for Ofsted inspections, says that an independent school which would have been labelled 'failing' in the state system received no major criticism from inspectors.

When he asked four experts to evaluate 20 inspection reports for clarity, consistency and usefulness, two of three independent inspection reports included came bottom and the third came sixteenth.

Mr Douse's report says that, while very many independent schools are very good, "there are many very dubious non-government schools concerning which the community requires better information and prospective

parents deserve fair warning". Private school inspection teams consist of a retired member of Her Majesty's Inspectorate and independent school teachers. Occasionally Ofsted also inspects private schools.

Mr Douse says the inspections are too cosy. "Two senior public school teachers, interviewed separately, each confided to me that, in the inspections in which they had participated, they never came close to setting down anything seriously negative."

The "failing" school, which charges high fees to children of service families and successful businessmen, received a "vague favourable" report.

But, says Mr Douse: "Very many of its pupils fail to gain entry to the public schools even of their second or third choice; several teachers are incapable of keeping order, let alone organising and encouraging learning; bullying and other forms of unacceptable behaviour are rampant; and value for money a cheerless joke."

ARTHUR HEARNS, Secretary of the Independent Schools Joint Council, which supervises inspections, said: "There is no question of any cosiness about our reports because every inspection team is headed by a former member of HMI who is independent. This HMI leads the team, sets the criteria, makes the judgements and writes the report. They worked closely with Ofsted and took advice from it, and met regularly with the Chief Inspector of Schools.

People living on the most remote island in the Orkneys said yesterday they would fight plans to close its school – even though it has just one pupil. Orkney Islands Council wants to axe Graemsay primary as part of a cost-cutting programme. It costs £45,000 a year. But people on the island say the decision would destroy the local community. Councillors meet today to decide

whether to grant a reprieve. Nine-year-old Kevin Pepper has been attending the school, staffed by one teacher, for four years. He wants to continue his studies there but councillors argue that a new five-day-a-week ferry service, to be introduced later this year, means he can commute to another school at Stromness on the Orkney mainland.

The boy's family, who do not want him to use the ferry, oppose the plan. Michelle Mowat, 32, Kevin's mother,

said: "I don't want Kevin to have to go to and from school by boat every day, crossing the Scapa Flow in what can often be horrendous conditions. It's awful."

Kevin's sister, Helen, 12, who goes to a secondary school in Stromness, travels from Graemsay on Monday mornings and returns on Friday afternoons. "She finds it hard travelling just twice a week and often feels very seasick," Mrs Mowat said. "So imagine what it would be like for a nine-year-old travelling by boat twice a day."

Kevin has been receiving lessons alone since September when two classmates started secondary education in Stromness. "I do get lonely at times – especially at playtime because it's pretty boring playing football on your own," he said.

"It would be great if a family moved to the island. I'd love to have a friend to play with. I want to stay here. If the school shuts the island will be destroyed."

Ann Sutherland, the island's councillor, said she was "des-

perately worried" about the knock-on effect of closure. "It would kill the island," she said. "What Graemsay needs is new blood. But there will be no hope of attracting new families if there is no school for their children to go to."

Orkney Islands Council said last night that closure was necessary "given the severe financial constraints we have to contend with". Graemsay is one of only two single-pupil primaries in Scotland. The other is at Loch Choire, in Sutherland.

None the less, the son of a father in the top one-fifth of the income distribution was more than three times more likely to end up in the top fifth than in the bottom fifth. And there is a clear "intergenerational transmission of poverty" through unemployment. Those raised in households where the father was unemployed are roughly twice as likely to end up with a substantial history of unemployment themselves. Equally, children of less well-off parents are significantly more likely to end up unemployed than those with better-paid fathers.

Despite that, 5 per cent who made it to the top one-tenth of the income distribution came from families whether the father had been in the bottom tenth – and some of those who moved up the income scale from the bottom did so with no formal educational qualifications. □ *Two Nations? The Inheritance of Poverty and Affluence*, IFS, 7 Ridgemont Street, London WC1; £6.

Islanders fight to save school with one pupil

JOHN ARUDGE
Scotland Correspondent

People living on the most remote island in the Orkneys said yesterday they would fight

plans to close its school – even though it has just one pupil.

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Despite that, 5 per cent who

Companies stay off-line

Companies are switching off the Internet because they see it as being of little benefit to business, according to a survey published today.

The global computer network has been hailed by enthusiasts as a communications revolution. But the survey of senior managers at major companies showed that only 35 per cent rated the Internet as an effective business tool.

Many companies with Internet access do not use it, according to Martin Walter, chief executive of the International Visual Communication Association, which commissioned the poll with the elec-

tronics giant Sony. He claimed that "surfing the net" may even be responsible for decreasing productivity because of the time wasted trawling through the on-screen pages.

"Just getting into the Internet can take as long as 45 minutes. We have heard of one or two companies that have actually banned employees from using it in office hours," said Mr Walter.

The IT [information technology] industry continues to rave about the success of the Internet in revolutionising business and personal communications. However, the reality is very different.

However, only 40 per cent had an overall strategy for providing visual communications.

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Campaign targets 'dismal' funerals

NICHOLAS TIMMINS
Public Policy Editor

Mourners are "herded into and through chapels on a production-line schedule". This "dismal experience" is likely to cost more than £1,000.

Lack of information and choice and the domination of the funeral market by big firms means that families are forced into making decisions they often regret, the college said, publishing its charter for consultation. Many are not able to resist "the pressures of aggressive entrepreneurs".

Lord Young of Dartington, who founded the Consumers' Association and created the National Funerals College, said the funeral industry had seen a transformation more radical than at any time in its history.

The Co-op alone conducts 25 per cent of funerals and the United States-based Service Corporation International (SCI) has taken over a growing number of funeral directors who trade under their old name but give SCI 15 per cent of the market.

"Local authorities, which own nine-tenths of crematoria, have a vested interest in rush-people through in the short time allowed, in order to keep to their budgets," Lord Young said. At the same time, the Department of Environment was encouraging the sale of crematoria to private business, almost inevitably funeral directors.

The charter seeks to establish 24 rights for the deceased and advocates appointing a Funeral Guardian to take charge of all arrangements. Prices should be clear and the ownership of funeral directors declared in advertisements and on the premises.

There should be choice over whether the body lies at home, at church or in a funeral parlour.

Clergy should receive more training to conduct funerals whether or not the deceased attended church. Different faiths should be respected, and the limited choice between burial and cremation restored by reopening old cemeteries and churchyards for burial.

Lord Young of Dartington: "Funerals rushed through"

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	60,000 - 234,999	5.0%
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	550,000 and OVER	6.0%
Instant Premium	£500 - £4,999	3.5%
	£5,000 - £9,999	3.6%
	£10,000 - £24,999	3.8%
	£25,000 and OVER	4.7%
Newbury Monthly Income	£22,500 - £14,999	4.90
	£21,500 and OVER	5.57
TESSA 93	£1 - £499	6.75
Young Saver	£500 - £4,999	2.15
	£5,000 - £9,999	2.35
	£10,000 - £24,999	2.85
	£25,000 and OVER	4.75
Paid up shares		1.40

Closed Accounts

	Current Rate	Rate of Interest
Prudence Shares		3.55
Castle Extra Interest		3.65
Tower Account		3.65
Tower Monthly Income		3.65
Gross Interest	To £4,999	2.95
	£5,000 and OVER	3.45
TESSA (1)		6.25
TESSA (9)		6.75

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Children follow in parents' footsteps

NICHOLAS TIMMINS

Minister to quit politics in search of new career

DONALD MACINTYRE
Political Editor

Tim Eggar, the Energy Minister, took Westminster by surprise yesterday by announcing that at the age of 44 he was standing down at the next election to pursue a career outside politics.

Mr Eggar, who has built up an impressive reputation among industry insiders as a minister who fought to curb the greatest excesses of the privatised utilities, provoked immediate claims from Labour that his departure was a "vote of no confidence" in the Government.

But Mr Eggar, whose North seat had a 9,000 majority in the last general election and who is a Minister of State at the Department of Trade and Industry, said he wanted to seek fresh challenges and opportunities in the private sector. He insisted he expected his seat to stay Conservative at the next election.

Mr Eggar declared that his decision was purely a career move with no political implications. "I have done 17 years as an MP, 11 of which have been as a minister," he said. "I am 44 and I have therefore a reasonable chance of another full-time career ahead of me. I have not been offered a job. I have not been approached about a job. I haven't searched for a job."

He has had one of the tough-

est careers of any minister of state since attaining that level in 1989.

He was caught firmly in the middle of the fiasco over pit closures, and was left coping virtually single-handedly with the political fall-out of the crisis after his boss, Michael Heseltine, suffered a heart attack. Tory sources were quick to suggest last night that despite his competence he had been unlikely to become a Cabinet minister.

He fought hard – and in the end unsuccessfully – to prevent directors of the National Grid last year from taking their share of dividends payable on privatisation instead of allowing them to be distributed to consumers in the form of price cuts. He did, however, secure a rebate for consumers.

He had more success in persuading Hanson and the US giant Southern Electric International to promise to withdraw their shareholdings in the National Grid after they took over two of the Regional Electricity Companies. And he has been active in pressing the industry to do more to expose itself to competition from 1989.

John Prescott, Labour's deputy leader, said yesterday that Mr Eggar's move would take "the spring out of John Major's step". He added: "He has also written off the chances of more than 100 MPs in even more marginal seats."

Mr Eggar, a qualified barrister who worked as a banker before entering Parliament in 1979, said: "I took the decision that it would be wrong for me to search for a job without having announced that I was leaving."

He told his local party: "As a member of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, I have argued strongly and consistently for greater understanding and interchange between Westminster, Whitehall and the private sector. After a lot of thought I have decided to take my own advice."

Tim Eggar: "I have decided to take my own advice"

16



High stakes: A punter playing a fruit machine in a games arcade in central London

Photograph: John Lawrence

ID cards call for teenage gamblers

JOHN RENTOUIL
Political Correspondent

Tighter controls on arcade gambling machines were demanded yesterday by Gamblers Anonymous as MPs studied Home Office rules to restrict access to new machines offering up to £10 cash prizes.

The police should issue identity cards to 18-year-olds to enable arcade managers to enforce the rules, said Paul Bellringer, of Gamblers Anonymous and the UK Forum on Young People and Gambling.

He was giving evidence to the Commons Select Committee

on Deregulation, which is looking at Home Office rules to "tame off" the new machines within arcades when they are brought in later this year.

Mr Bellringer told MPs that in one region, the North-West, which includes the resort of Blackpool, four in 10 regular members, half under 25, have machine gambling problems where 10 years ago there were none. "Almost all have developed the problem between the ages of 12 and 14," he said. The evidence was that the enforcement of the existing voluntary code – barring under-16s – was "often quite lax".

David Evans, Tory MP for Welwyn Hatfield, asked: "Don't you think there's another side to that coin – amusement arcades help keep young people off the streets when they might be beating up old ladies?"

But Terence Neville, of the Amusement Arcade Action Group, attacked arcades as "seedy places". Asked by Mr Evans if the idea gambling machines present a hazard was not just a "fantasy", Mr Neville cited Home Office research which found that young people became addicted to gambling in later life; that there are correlations between child gambling,

truancy and petty crime; and children are attracted to cash prize machines.

John Sykes, Tory MP for Scarborough, questioned whether the Home Office order would not "impose massive new regulations" which would damage the amusement industry.

He was not supported by John Bollom, President of the British Amusement Catering Trades Association (BACTA), which claims to represent 80 per cent of arcade operators. "We see this new machine as an opportunity but accept that with cash prizes there have to be some restrictions," he said.

Speaker upholds Sedgemore motion

The Speaker, Betty Boothroyd, yesterday referred to the Commons Procedure Committee the use of an Early Day Motion directly referring to the daughter of a former Cabinet minister despite a High Court gagging order preventing her from being named, writes Donald Macintyre.

But the Speaker upheld the Labour MP Brian Sedgemore's

courts of a Mary Bell order, a blanket gag on all publicity relating to a child who has fought a magnified battle against the adversity of a brain tumour, frequent fits, eventual surgical removal of the tumour, and a lengthy recuperation; and believes that the mother has every right now to fight for proper educational provision for her daughter, using publicity to

pursue her cause". The motion has been signed by at least four other Labour MPs.

Yesterday Ann Winterton, Tory MP for Congleton, asked the Speaker if parliamentary privilege had been breached. Miss Boothroyd said she was satisfied that it does not breach any existing rule of this House, but had referred the matter to the Procedure Committee.

One of Labour's more concrete policy promises – the freedom to roam over open countryside – was given a test run in the Commons yesterday and immediately ran into the hostility of an MP fighting the landowners' corner.

He was angered to find it opposed after discussing it only last week with the Country Landowners' Association. Outside the chamber he accused them of renegeing on a promise of further consultation by briefing MPs on their objections.

Mr Yeo, Conservative MP for Suffolk South and a former environment minister, said the access Bill was a "legislative dinosaur" and showed how little Labour understood the countryside.

But Paddy Tipping, MP for Sherwood and a rambler, had solid support from his Labour colleagues and the Bill's introduction was approved by 144 votes to 60.

The tight parliamentary timetable means it will not reach the statute book, but that was never Mr Tipping's intention, nor that of the Ramblers' Association which drafted the measure.

The association regards it as

"a first step" – the basis for consultation with landowners and conservationists on how access can be balanced with the requirements of land management and shooting interests.

"It is not a Utopian demand

with everything the access lobby would wish for in an ideal world," Mr Tipping said. "To characterise it as allowing unrestricted access reveals prejudice and vested interest."

Freedom to roam legislation

has a long – if unsuccessful

pedigree going back to the

Access to Mountains Bill in 1884

by the Liberal James Bryce.

The object has changed little:

to give the public a right to walk over

mountains, moors and other uncultivated land for fresh air

and recreation.

It ceased to look an unlikely

prospect when John Smith,

the late Labour leader and a keen hillwalker, adopted it as

a party policy.

Successive shadow

environment spokesmen have

reaffirmed the promise, though

emphasising that obligations

would also be placed on walkers.

Those who failed to control

their dogs, dropped litter or lit

fires would be treated as trespassers.

Mr Tipping commended the

Bill as "the way to celebrate the

ardous areas, while those who wanted to curtail the right to roam would have "go on bended knee to some council lackey". The whole approach was based on "the old Labour attitude", Mr Yeo said, and he was surprised it had slipped the notice of Tony Blair.

Mr Blair has had his mind

closer focused on education and law and order as the Tories have hammered on with charges of "hypocrisy" against the Labour frontbench. MPs were expecting another bruising encounter at Question Time yesterday but the heavy blows never materialised.

Struggling with a cold, the Prime Minister said Labour "sometimes uses tough words on crime but when it comes to actions they are very soft". But Mr Blair hit back with the painful reminder for the Conservatives that "under them crime has doubled".

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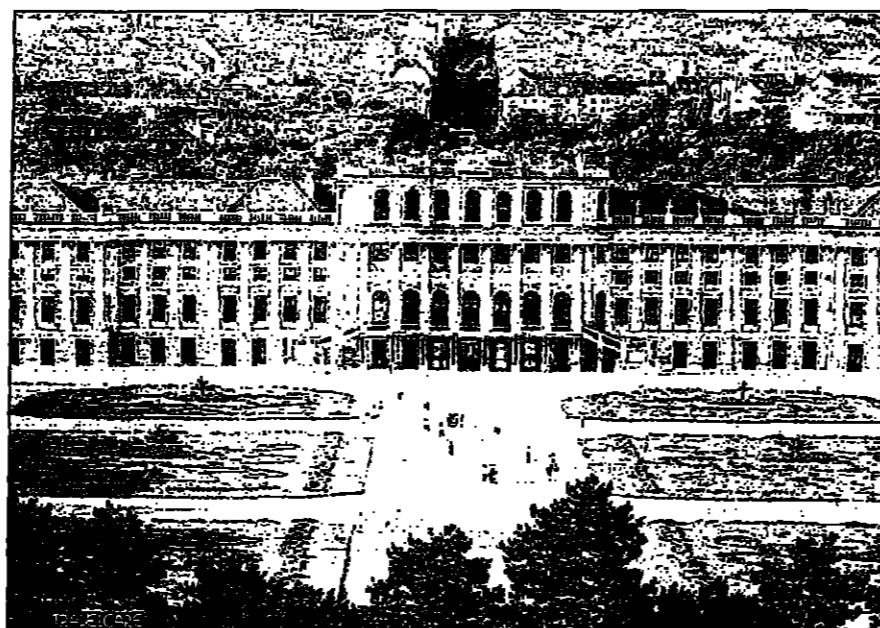
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8 international

EMU crisis: France and Germany unveil plans to stimulate economies and win support for monetary union

Paris and Bonn set course for 'Euro'

TONY BARBER
Europe Editor

Germany and France yesterday countered growing scepticism about the European Union's planned single currency by unveiling measures to stimulate their flagging economies, create jobs and keep the project of monetary union on schedule.

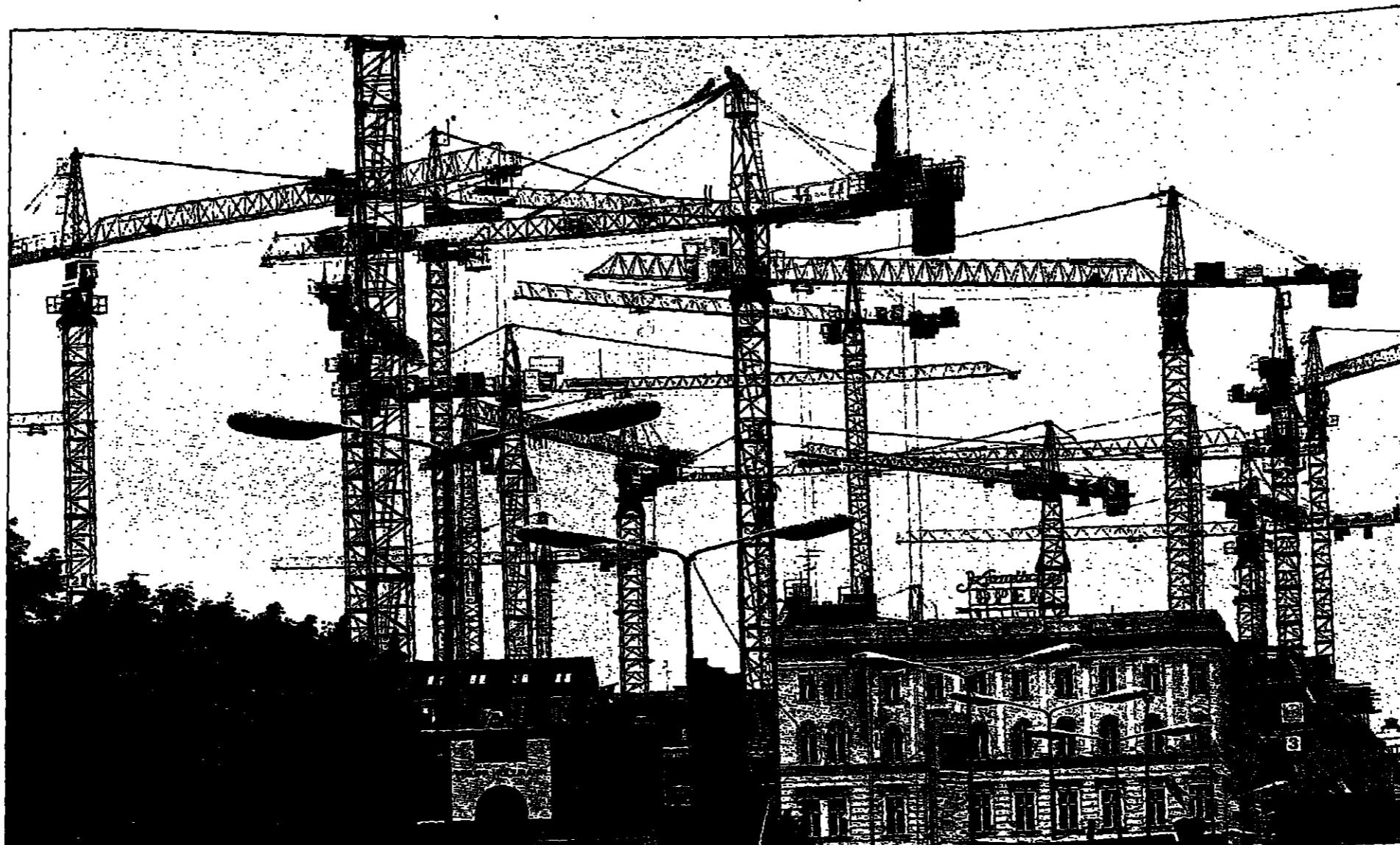
They announced their proposals for economic expansion as the European Commission President, Jacques Santer, worked on a speech to the European Parliament in which he is expected to call today for an EU-wide effort to promote jobs and investment, while reaffirming the January 1999 deadline for starting monetary union.

France, Germany and the Commission are worried that European public opinion is increasingly associating high unemployment and a slowdown in economic growth with the efforts of EU governments to meet the Maastricht treaty's conditions for launching the Euro, the recently named single currency. French and German leaders hope that the measures set out yesterday will boost their economies sufficiently to enable both countries to meet the Maastricht targets and to convince voters of the Euro's merits.

"We believe that this slowdown is temporary and that a rebound in growth must be expected from the end of the first half of this year," said France's Finance Minister, Jean Arthuis.

Although the announcements were made simultaneously in Bonn and Paris, diplomats and economists said the German government had been doubtful about French attempts to present the measures as a grand, co-ordinated initiative to restore Europe's fortunes. The two programmes share the broad aim of breathing fresh life into wilting economies but German officials noted that each country faced distinct challenges and was developing separate responses.

The highlight of the French measures, which were generally modest in scope, was an attempt to increase consumer spending by cutting the interest on the most popular tax-free savings account, the Livret A, from 4.5 to 3.5 per cent. Big



High hopes: A building boom in the Friedrichstrasse, east Berlin, but politicians in former East Germany fear cutbacks before EU monetary union

Photograph: Brian Harris

French banks responded quickly by lowering base lending rates from 7.5 to 7 per cent as of tomorrow, a move that could generate extra economic activity.

The more ambitious German measures, described by the Economics Minister, Günter Rexrodt, as a "vitamin dose" for the economy, involve a variety of business and wealth tax cuts. In addition, there is the DM4bn (£1.8bn) reduction from July 1997, announced on Monday, in the "solidarity surcharge" on income tax – an unpopular supplementary tax designed to raise money for modernising the former Communist east German economy.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl's

centre-right coalition government was criticised on three fronts yesterday for cutting the tax surcharge. East German politicians said the measure looked as if the rich west was abandoning the east, still much poorer despite an infusion from the west of hundreds of billions of marks since unification in 1990.

Several big western Länder also opposed the tax surcharge cut, arguing that the federal government was asking them to make up DM3bn of the lost revenues. Meanwhile, opposition Social Democrats accused Mr Kohl's Christian Democrats of introducing the measure in an effort to boost the chances of the struggling Free Democrats.

the junior partner in the Bonn government, in three Land elections in March.

The French and German governments stressed that their renewed drive for growth would not come at the expense of more public spending and bigger budget deficits. In public, at least, German and French leaders remain fully committed to strict adherence to the terms for monetary union, which require participating countries to have a budget deficit of no more than 3 per cent of gross domestic product in 1997.

This target is not proving easy for either Germany or France to meet. The German government's annual economic report, officially released

yesterday, predicted a 1996 budget deficit of 3.5 per cent of GDP, after an unexpectedly high 3.6 per cent last year.

Moreover, the government is forecasting average unemployment this year of 10 per cent and economic growth of only 1.5 per cent, after 1.9 per cent in 1995.

Mr Kohl hopes that the new tax-cutting measures, coupled with falling German interest rates, will inject enough dynamism into the economy to enable Germany to qualify for the single currency in 1997.

France's efforts to cut its budget deficit from an estimated 5.2 per cent of GDP last year to 3 per cent in 1997 are being blown off course by a much sharper slowdown in eco-

nomic activity than the centre-right government anticipated. Last autumn it predicted 1996 growth of 2.8 per cent, but the estimates of independent economists range from a poor 1.8 per cent to a sickly 1.5 per cent.

Worse still, unemployment figures for last November and December, due to be published shortly, are expected to show a rise from the 11.5 per cent recorded in October.

All this will put pressure on France's budget deficit by reducing the tax revenues that a government expects to receive when an economy is expanding and unemployment is falling.

Economists believe that, to

get the government will have to redouble the austerity measures which, late last year, provoked France's worst social unrest since 1968. However, as yesterday's announcement in Paris indicated, the government wants to focus its attention as much on job creation and growth as on rigid fiscal discipline.

The problem for France and Germany is that there is not much room for manoeuvre if the Maastricht conditions are treated as sacrosanct. Goldman Sachs, the investment house, forecasts that both countries will miss the deficit target in 1997 – with France at 3.4 per cent of GDP and Germany at 3.3 per cent.

GI's
survive
Bosnia
mine

CHRISTOPHER BELLAMY
Tuzla

A US Bradley armoured troop carrier yesterday became the second Nato vehicle in two days to hit a Bosnian anti-tank mine, but this time the crew escaped injury.

Three British soldiers were killed on Sunday when their Spartan troop carrier hit a mine in the so-called Avni area between Mrkojic Grad and Titov Divar. Their bodies were taken to Split yesterday and will be flown home to Britain at the end of the week.

The US troops were luckier: their vehicle avoided the full force of the blast, losing a track and its right rear wheel. The Bradley was in the "zone of separation", the four-kilometre-wide area between Serb and Muslim-Croat forces 17 kilometres south of Tuzla, when the blast occurred.

The peace implementation force – I-For – has received records of known minefields from the three former warring sides but not all minefields were recorded, records were lost in the fighting and some of the officers responsible have been killed. The British-led division based at Gornji Vakuf has received records of 1,975 minefields from the three sides, and there must be a similar number in both the US and French sectors.

"The line of confrontation in this area is really one large minefield," said Major Paul Karonen, a spokesman for the US-led northern area around Tuzla.

The British, however, face the biggest problem, as in addition to patrolling the zone of separation they are having to prepare the 400-square-mile Avni for handing back to the Bosnian Serbs. All Croat forces must be out of the area by Monday. But clearing or marking all the mines in the area is an impossible task.

■ Zagreb – Prince Charles will visit Bosnia beginning next Wednesday, AP reports. He plans to meet British troops serving with I-For in central Bosnia, and to visit the capital, Sarajevo. The prince will also visit Dubrovnik in southern Croatia two days later, a Croatian security official said.

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IN BRIEF

US university bans positive-bias policy
Los Angeles - The president of the University of California, moving to head off conflict in the nine-campus organisation, agreed to ban all programmes designed to boost admissions of minority students, writes Tim Cornewell. From the spring of 1998, Richard Atkinson announced, UC will no longer use sex or race as a criteria for undergraduate admissions. He had fought a rearguard action to delay the new policy in an escalating confrontation with his governing board.

Ex-president to investigate blood row
Jerusalem - Israel named a former president, Yitzhak Navon, to head an inquiry into treatment of an Ethiopian Jewish community angry and humiliated at the discarding of their blood donations. Mr Navon, a Sephardic Jew, was Israel's first president of non-European descent and held office from 1978 to 1983. The blood controversy continued to haunt Israeli officials after a heart surgeon said on a television chat show that he would avoid operating on Ethiopians for fear of catching AIDS. Reuter

Kohl's eastern protégé goes on trial
Berlin - Wolfgang Schmitz, Chancellor Helmut Kohl's first political protégé in East Germany, went on trial on charges of betraying legal clients to the Stasi security police before the Berlin Wall fell in 1989. Mr Schmitz, who denies informing on two dissidents who were then forced to emigrate, was the lead candidate in a conservative "Alliance for Germany". Mr Kohl brought together for East Germany's first democratic election in March 1990. But his career as a Stasi informer was disclosed days before the vote and he withdrew in disgrace. Reuter

Angola peace hopes rise
Luanda - More than 1,000 Unita fighters were waiting to hand in their arms at UN-supervised assembly camps in two Angola provinces, sparking hopes the country's faltering peace was at last back on track. The Unita leader, Jonas Savimbi, has promised to disarm 16,500 of his fighters by 8 February, when the UN Security Council reviews its mandate to Angola. Reuter

British envoy's residence under fire
Dhaka - Gunmen fired six shots at the residence of the Deputy British High Commissioner in Dhaka, Miss M R McIntosh. Diplomatic sources said one police guard at the residence at Gushan diplomatic enclave was wounded. British and US envoys have been criticised by opposition parties for what they allege is support for the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party. Reuter

Priest faces jail over missionary work
New Delhi - A court has ordered a Belgian priest and an Indian nun jailed for six months for converting 94 tribal people to Christianity in a central Indian state. Judge C L Patel said he punished Louis Birje, 82, and Sister Vriddhi Ekta, 50, for not keeping local authorities informed about their work in the remote Sarguja district of Madhya Pradesh state. The two are on bail and plan to appeal against their conviction. AP

Diet of trouble
Bangalore - Nearly 100 farmers broke through a police cordon and smashed up a Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet, demanding that the fast-food chain leave India. India's first Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet ran into trouble soon after it opened last June, when a nationalist farmers' organisation protested that its food was un-Indian and unhealthy. AP

Old Australians for the Old Country
Sydney - Many mainly elderly protesters took to the streets in support of the monarchy. Police said 15,000 people, many of them flag-waving grandparents, turned out for a rally which coincided with the departure from office of the Queen's representative in New South Wales, Peter Sinclair, a retired admiral. AP

Gays to have marriage-type ceremony
San Francisco - Gay and lesbian couples here will be able to seal their relationship with a symbolic marriage-like ceremony. The governing Board of Supervisors voted 10-0 for an ordinance authorising the county clerk or a deputised representative to perform a civil ceremony with "marriage-like vows" for couples who register with the city as domestic partners. Reuter

Tomorrow: Yeltsin and the democrats

Yeltsin juggling act: President's men woo Zhirinovsky to rescue prospects of re-election

Kremlin courts far-right bogeyman

PHIL REEVES
Moscow

After purging his administration of its top liberals, and his wild bombardment of a Chechen-held village in Dageslan, Boris Yeltsin is trying to persuade alienated supporters, at home and in the West, that he has not become a Dr Jekyll suffering from a particularly nasty dose of Mr Hyde.

Faced with a chorus of criticism, the President has portrayed his headline conduct as a matter of tactics, the resort of an unpopular leader facing an election that could oust him and return the Kremlin to the Communists. Reforms, he insists, will continue. So the last person you would expect to find him and his associates buttering up is Vladimir Zhirinovsky, maverick leader of the ultra-nationalist Liberal Democratic Party.

Yet there is evidence that the increasingly isolated Yeltsin administration and the Kremlin-backed Our Home is Russia political party are discreetly courting Mr Zhirinovsky in the hope of boosting their own chances of re-election. From the President's viewpoint, this makes sense on several fronts,

although it involves a level of pragmatism that would bring a blush to the cheeks of the most hardened political hustler.

If he decides he is healthy enough to run for a second term - and he has been campaigning since the New Year - Mr Yeltsin's main opponents will be the Communists. They emerged as by far the strongest force in December's parliamentary elections, with 22 per cent of the poll, more than double that of Our Home is Russia.

The President has been seeking to woo their voters away by promising to improve the lot of their core constituents, the tens of millions of Russians for whom free-market reforms have only meant more impoverishment. Recently he waved wads of money at them - vowing to increase pensions and government pay - prompting Western fears that the government is heading for a pre-election spending spree that will play havoc with the economy.

But Mr Yeltsin's strategists know that no amount of handouts will beat the Communists outright. The Kremlin, therefore, is believed to be discreetly turning to Mr Zhirinovsky's party, which came second in



Odd couple: Zhirinovsky (left) had a hit-list of six ministers he wanted out. Yeltsin has sacked five of them so far

December, in the hope that it will also draw voters away from them - enough to ensure that Mr Yeltsin gets into a run-off.

Ideally, they would like the run-off to be against Mr Zhirinovsky. Although the ultra-nationalist's madcap antics - which include demanding the annexation of Alaska and promising cheaper vodka - attracted 7 million protest votes, few analysts believe Russians want him in the Kremlin. Mr

Yeltsin's victory, therefore, would be assured.

It is more likely, however, that

Mr Yeltsin would be pitted against a Communist, probably the party's leader, Gennady Zyuganov. Should this occur, the Yeltsin camp is likely to press Mr Zhirinovsky to call on his supporters to back the President in the second round.

Evidence of connections between the Kremlin and the ultra-nationalists is - like much in

Russian politics - based on a scattering of details.

Earlier this month the parliamentary leader of Our Home is Russia was caught by a Russian television camera crew with a leading Zhirinovsky aide in the VIP lounge at Moscow's international airport.

Both were off to Switzerland, apparently for inter-party talks.

Last week, the *Moscow Times* pointed out that Mr Zhirinovsky had a list of six Yeltsin ministers whom he wanted sacked. Five have since been kicked out. Meanwhile, Mr Zhirinovsky's bloc in the State Duma, the lower house, has been quietly supportive of Mr Yeltsin for several years.

Few analysts appear to dispute that some sort of deal-making is under way. "It makes sense," said Dmitri Trenin, a political analyst with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "It works to bolster the President's chances."

It also offers useful benefits for Mr Zhirinovsky, who knows

he has little chance of victory, and has long been open to behind-the-scenes bartering.

The support of the Kremlin delivers many advantages, not least of which is better access to state-run television - a linchpin which the theatrical Mr Zhirinovsky adores.

"He ultimately wants to be

given some government positions," said Dmitri Trenin, a political analyst with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "It works to bolster the President's chances."

Whether such manoeuvring will work remains to be seen, but Mr Yeltsin certainly has a huge task on his hands. The latest opinion poll by the All-Russian Centre for Public Opinion Research put Mr Zyuganov first, with 11.3 per cent. Mr Yeltsin's measly 5.4 per cent only won him fifth place.

Tomorrow: Yeltsin and the democrats

PM fails to calm American fears

RUPERT CORNWELL
Washington

Despite reassuring words from both sides, the visit here by the Russian Prime Minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, has left the Clinton administration more confused than ever over its policy towards Moscow, above all, over its attitude to President Boris Yeltsin. Mr Yeltsin's health and reformist credentials are equally under question, five months before Russia's presidential elections in June.

After co-chairing this week's regular session of the US-Russian co-operation commission with Vice-President Al Gore, Mr Chernomyrdin yesterday met President Bill Clinton, promising Moscow would continue on the path of "reform", but warning that "certain corrections" were necessary. It is these "corrections", how-

ever, which concern the administration as it debates whether it should still support Mr Yeltsin. Some analysts take

that view, arguing that the sackings of economic reformers from the government, and even the brutal Chechen campaign, were dictated by Mr Yeltsin's need to shore up his position among conservatives before an expected announcement that he will stand for re-election.

Other administration officials insist Mr Yeltsin is simply too erratic and discredited and unwell, and that Washington ought to throw in its lot with genuine reformers such as Grigory Yavlinsky, candidate of the liberal Yabloko party in the June vote.

The uncertainty has spread to the International Monetary Fund, where problems have unexpectedly arisen with a new \$9bn (£6bn) credit line that

Moscow has been negotiating to consolidate its move to a market economy.

Yesterday Mr Chernomyrdin held separate talks with the IMF managing director, Michel Camdessus, to iron out the difficulties. According to the Russians these surround the conditions attached to the credit. In fact they have been caused by the lurch away from reform, including delays in privatisation programmes on which the IMF has insisted.

Washington now faces the dilemma it confronted six years ago, as former president Mikhail Gorbachev lost his grip on the dying Soviet Union: whether to stick with a familiar leader (as by common consent it did for too long in the case of Mr Gorbachev), or seek an alternative.

This time, all that US officials agree on is that the most prob-

able alternatives, the Communists under Gennady Zyuganov, or the ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky, would be worse.

To complicate matters, they know well that in the current climate in Russia, overt backing for Mr Yeltsin or any other "reformist" would be more of a hindrance than a help.

Hence there is extreme caution on both sides. "The market reforms will continue," Mr Chernomyrdin assured Mr Gore, before adding that the Yeltsin government would be making "some corrections in the social sphere".

The response from the State Department was equally laconic. The Russian Prime Minister's warning was "not ominous in any way", a spokesman said, before refusing to comment on the latest economic policy decisions taken in Moscow.

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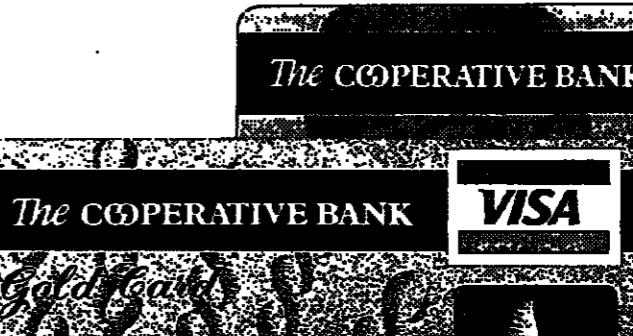
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international

Samper defies clamour for his 'dignified exit'

PHIL DAVIDSON
Latin America Correspondent

Colombia's Congress went into emergency session yesterday to tackle a growing crisis over allegations that President Ernesto Samper took millions of dollars of the Cali cocaine cartel's money to finance his 1994 election campaign.

Amid increasing calls for Mr Samper's resignation, and even his arrest, members of the Senate and House of Representatives interrupted their holidays in an attempt to find a 'dignified exit' for the President. Mr Samper denies knowledge of drug money and refuses to resign.

"We have to give Samper a way out," said Senator Eduardo Pizzino of the opposition Conservative Party. His remark appeared to reflect the views of most of the country's political establishment, which is not so much shocked by the allegations against the President as concerned over a power vacuum in a country where drug lords wield widespread influence and Marxist guerrillas control large areas.

Some Colombian political commentators fear Mr Samper will retreat into a new populism, appealing to the masses and blaming the United States for his demise. It is an open secret in Bogota that the administration of President Bill Clinton has been trying to undermine Mr Samper for the past year, convinced he had ties with the Cali cartel.

Many Colombians fear such a move by the President could return the country to the political polarisation of the 1950s, a period known as *La Violencia* (The Violence) in which at

least 200,000 people were killed in feuding between Conservative and Liberal Party supporters. Mr Samper is a Liberal. Even Mr Samper's own party has failed to rally behind him. Its eight national leaders issued a statement on Monday saying he should be investigated but be presumed innocent in the meantime.

The latest attack on Mr Samper's credibility came yesterday when a newspaper published a letter, apparently signed by cocaine barons, saying they had


Ernesto Samper: denies being backed by drug lords

given Mr Samper cardboard boxes full of cash during his election campaign. The letter was signed 'The Extractables', a name formerly used by the Medellin cocaine cartel in its communications with its authorities.

The drug lords coined the term at a time when Washington was pushing for their extradition to face drug-smuggling charges in the United States. The drug cartels' influence, and, no doubt, money, won the day and extradition was banned under a change in

the Colombian constitution. Some Colombians expressed doubt that the Cali cartel would use the same term used by its former Medellin rivals. The Medellin cartel has faded since police killed its leader, Pablo Escobar, in 1993. But editors of the influential daily *El Tiempo* said they believed the letter had been written by the jailed Cali bosses, the brothers Miguel and Gilberto Rodriguez Orejuela.

"We declare that we turned over to Mr Ernesto Samper cardboard boxes of money to finance his campaign," it said.

The latest crisis began last summer when Mr Samper's former campaign treasurer, Santiago Medina, said millions of dollars had been handed over in gift-wrapped cartons to the campaign. When Medina was jailed – since reduced to house arrest – it was a question of his word against the President's and Mr Samper stood firm.

Earlier this month, however, the President's former campaign director and Defence Minister, Fernando Botero, echoed Medina's charges and went further, saying Mr Samper knowingly received cocaine money and later launched a cover-up. Mr Botero, son of the renowned sculptor of the same name, was speaking from jail, where he is being held during investigation of the campaign's funding.

Mr Botero admitted wrongdoing but said he learned of drug money only during the final 10 days of the campaign and then kept quiet to prevent a constitutional crisis. He is assumed to have cut a deal with prosecutors before breaking his silence earlier this month.



Past Imperfect: A part-built museum mars the view of the 4,600-year-old Djoser step pyramid, south of Cairo. The Egyptian government yesterday gave orders for the building site to be cleared to prevent damage to nearby ruins

Alaska poll hits Dole's morale

RUPERT CORNWELL
Washington

Bob Dole, once the unassailed Republican frontrunner, suffered another setback in his attempt to win his party's presidential nomination yesterday as he came a distant third in a non-binding preference vote in Alaska, despite virtually unanimous backing from the state's party hierarchy.

In terms of convention delegates, the outcome means nothing: only 10,000 votes were cast. But it will damage morale in the Dole camp a week before the first serious candidates' confrontation in Louisiana and less than a fortnight before Iowa holds the caucuses that start the election season.

The winner of the Alaska straw poll was the conservative commentator, Pat Buchanan, with 32 per cent, followed by Steve Forbes, the publishing magnate who is fast emerging as Mr Dole's possible nemesis, with 31 per cent. Mr Dole, who did not personally campaign, scored only 17 per cent.

With Iowa and the crucial New Hampshire primary fast approaching, the aura of inevitability around the Senate Majority Leader's candidacy has vanished. One factor was his dismal response to President Bill Clinton's State of the Union address last week; a second was relentless advertising by Mr Forbes. Most important is the impression that at 72, he is the wrong man at the wrong time.

In New Hampshire the omens are worrying. One survey showed his lead over Mr Forbes slipping from 17 to 11 per cent. On Monday one poll put Mr Forbes ahead, by 29 to 24 per cent. Mr Dole has accused the liberal media of favouring Mr Forbes, whose fortune is put at \$450m (£300m). Or maybe, Mr Dole said: "He owns stock in all those networks".

War scribes' old haunt rises from rubble of a nightmare past

Just when you thought it was safe to go back to Beirut ... the Commodore has returned.

Even hardened scribes might cringe at the memory: the filthy rooms, the sweat-smeared bar counter, dingy corridors, the lavatories that wouldn't flush, and bills of epic proportions.

How did so many male journalists work in the wretched place, let alone smoke so much dope, drink so much booze and seduce – or attempt? While the Sarajevo Holiday Inn is the latest in a mythic line of war reporters' retreats, always thought it would be difficult to shake off the nightmare of the old Commodore.

Not so, it seems. For the new Commodore is a quite different beast, one that has almost self-consciously altered its shape to forget the past: automatic doors, card keys to enter the bedrooms, a computerised switchboard and digitally-controlled lifts. The Lebanese Boubes family, which has some Syrian roots and has bought a 25-year contract from the Kuwaiti owners to run the Commodore, has turned the old hulk into the starship *Enterprise*, all marble floors and columns. The seedy "Casbah" night-club, where gunmen and whores once pawed each other beside the gambling tables, has been turned into an under-

ground conference chamber with translators' booths. The darkness of the old Chinese cafe, where journalists once told their long – and usually fictitious – war stories, is now a Japanese restaurant, complete with wooden warriors, a flowing river crossed by a wooden bridge and four goldfish.

The Boubes family won't

name a figure but it cost around \$20m (£13m) to get rid of the nightmare past. And – thanks to the gods that watched over us in the days when Israeli shells crashed around (and, on one occasion, into) the old Commodore – there is no parrot. Ah, the parrot. Suicide should be contemplated if that

BEIRUT DAYS

wretched story should be retold – as it assuredly will when the scribes return for just one more drink.

The parrot, they will write, could whistle like an incoming shell and mimic Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. The parrot went missing, they will tell readers, when the old Commodore was wrecked by Druze and Shia gunmen in 1986. And they will recount how they vainly raised reward money for the bird's return. And when the staff who had befriended the journalists were summarily dismissed,

hotel's dreadful predecessor. Not one of the old hotel staff works at the Commodore now, for the official opening in a few days' time, a Sudanese doorman in gold-fringed blue uniform will greet bow-tied guests.

Of course, images linger. Here stood the front door where the AP's Gerry Labelle was nicked by a ricocheting bullet when he slipped out of the bar to check the office news-wire. Here was the spot where Terry Anderson sat at New Year's Eve dinner less than three months before kidnappers took him away for a seven-year stretch in a basement. Here stood the reception desk where an NBC television producer

was presented with a phone bill to the United States slightly larger than the cost of a first-class return air ticket to New York. Here was the bedroom ... But no, some memories are best left in the hundreds of tons of rubble that Samir Boubes, the half-British son of the hotel's proprietor, has hauled out of the old Commodore.

He acknowledges he is pleased that the new Commodore does not resemble the old. "The internal walls of our

Lebanese restaurant are made of Aleppo stone, the furniture, heating system, kitchens and laundry are American; we've totally rebuilt the place," he said. "We're a centre-of-town hotel

and we're looking for businessmen to stay here. We may get a few journalists but I don't think we'll get that many – I'm not that pessimistic."

And at least there'll be no parrot, I add. But a strange expression crosses Samir Boubes's face, a mixture of discretion and palpable concern. "Well, not quite," he said. "We had so many people talking to us about the bloody parrot that ..." And here there was a moment of silence as the young man reflected upon the impact of his words. "Well, we're going to get a parrot."

Reader, I lied.

Robert Fisk

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The production Boxster may differ slightly from the prototype shown here but it is sure to be a real head-turner.

To enter our prize draw you must collect five differently numbered tokens from the eight we will be printing in *The Independent* and the *Independent on Sunday*. Today we are printing Token Four. Token Five will appear in *The Independent* tomorrow, and an entry form will be published on Saturday.

1. To enter our Porsche Boxster prize draw you need to collect five differently numbered tokens from the eight we will be printing (one of which is a starter token which can be used as any number).

2. The closing date for entries is 23 February 1996. Send to: The Independent/Porsche Boxster Prize Draw, PO Box 250, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL7 1TU along with a completed entry form which will be printed on Saturday 3 February.

3. For previously published tokens or an entry form send a SAE to: The Independent/Porsche Boxster Token Request or Entry Form, PO Box 83, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL7 1TU. Only 2 tokens are available per application. If you require both tokens and a form, please send separate SAEs. Requests must be received by first post 12 February 1996.

4. Employees and agents of Newspaper Publishing Pic or those of any other national newspaper company or any firm connected with the promotion are not eligible to take part, neither are their relatives or members of their families or households. Entrants must be aged 18 or over.

5. The winner must co-operate for publicity purposes if required and accept that his/her name and photograph will be published in the paper.

6. Photocopies of tokens and entry forms are not acceptable.

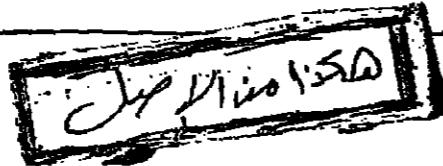
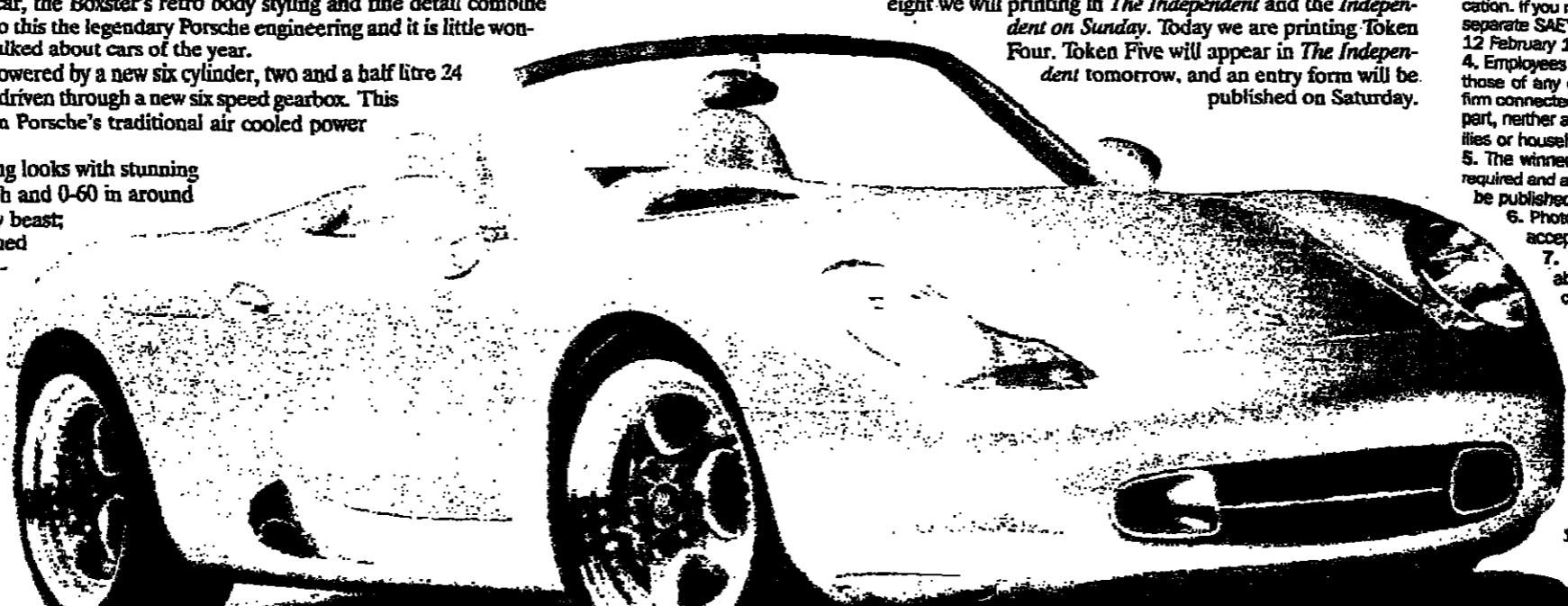
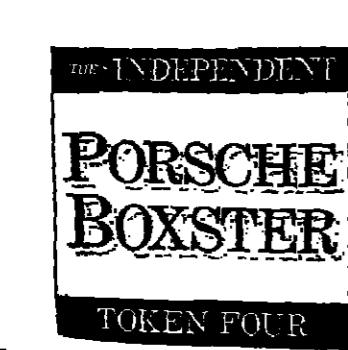
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8. No correspondence will be entered into. Proof of postage will not be accepted as proof of receipt. The promoter will not take responsibility for entries lost or damaged in the post. The Editor's decision is final.

9. The competition is open to residents of the UK and the Irish Republic. The prize will be as stated, with no cash alternative. The Editor's decision is final.

10. The Porsche Boxster should be available in November 1996, but is dependent on production dates.

Promoter: Newspaper Publishing Pic, One Canada Square, London E14 5DA.



JY KIM 15/50

Alaska
poll hits
Dole's
morale

ALBERT CORNWELL

Vietnamese refugees: Twenty years after the harrowing exodus, UN makes deal to end the saga

Pressure mounts on boat people to go home

STEVE CRAWSHAW

"Boat people, n.p.: refugees, esp. from Vietnam, who set off in boats to find a country that will admit them."

It is rare for a regional humanitarian crisis to have such an impact that it gives rise to a new entry in the dictionaries.

But the boat people were different from the start. Their agonising drama shook the world. Now, 20 years on, the era is coming to an end. Willingly or not, the remaining 40,000 boat people are about to go home.

The tale of the boat people began with tragedy, mixed with lashings of Western guilt. After the Communist victory in South Vietnam, hundreds of thousands piled into boats in search of a new life. On the open seas they were prey to pirates and sharks; tens of thousands are reckoned to have died.

Their immediate destinations were less than welcoming. Mahathir Mohamad, Malaysia's Prime Minister, who was then home minister, said it would be necessary to shoot on sight. Bizarrely, in response to international outrage, this was claimed to be a mishearing: according to the sanitised version, he was alleged to have said "shoot on sight". "Push-back" became a standard policy.

Western countries, especially the United States, where many were ashamed of waging the war, losing the war, or both, were embarrassed at seeing Vietnamese brutally driven back. But they gagged at the thought of allowing ever-increasing numbers to arrive.

Instead, it was agreed that the boat people would stay temporarily in the "countries of first asylum", until their applications had been processed, or until they could be persuaded to return home.

At the end of the 1980s, partly because of less stringent controls inside Vietnam, the trickle turned once more into a flood. In 1989 a comprehensive plan of action (CPA) was created, which sought to bring the problem under control.

Attempts to repatriate the boat people were fiercely resisted. In Hong Kong, which has 20,000 Vietnamese, by far the biggest share of the refugees, there have been riots.

In the West there was much

queasiness over harrowing pictures of Vietnamese families huddled behind barbed wire. But the United Nations agency for refugees, the UNHCR, remains unwilling to be critical. "The UNHCR is opposed to the use of force... But these are illegal immigrants who are being deported," emphasises Ruth Marshall, UNHCR spokeswoman in Geneva. The UNHCR regards them as "economic migrants" and is confident there will be no persecution of those who return.

For years, the Americans

were reluctant to be involved in forced repatriation, to the irritation of countries such as Britain, which believed the problem could long ago have been solved if not for American concerns. In theory there is still a deadlock, as the Republican-led Congress still wants to second-guess UNHCR's screening of would-be refugees.

In practice the returnees seem to have few choices left. A meeting hosted by UNHCR in Bangkok this month agreed the camps will be closed down by the end of June; Hong Kong, with its more than 20,000 boat people, gets 12 months' extra grace. (China, with an eye on next year's handover, has talked of Britain's "unshirkable responsibility" for solving the problem.) A meeting in early March is due to finalise the deal that was agreed in Bangkok.

The deal became possible partly because of a new sense of determination at the UNHCR, which was worried about its involvement in what it sees as an expensive anomaly.

Equally importantly, Vietnam has, in the words of one Hong Kong official, "stopped playing hardball". With its rapidly developing economy, Vietnam wants good relations with its neighbours. It joined Asean, the Association of South-East Asian Nations, last year. Even now it is unclear how it will absorb 40,000 returnees. None the less, it is keen to earn brownie points. The pill is sugar-coated by what the UNHCR describes as a "financially favourable" package: an average annual income (around £230) for each man, woman and child who returns.

Officially everybody is playing down the suggestion of forced repatriation. But the



Bid for freedom: Refugees from Vietnam crammed into an old ship. The Communist takeover triggered an exodus of several hundred thousand people, the last of whom must now go back

Photograph: AP

HUGH POPE

Istanbul

Grey frigates, sleek coast-guard cutters and roaring warplanes yesterday circled a small rocky outcrop in the Aegean. So that an increasingly strident Greece and Turkey were still each

and abandoned in 1953, he said.

Although Turkish leaders such as the caretaker Prime Minister, Tansu Ciller, have started insisting that the outcrops are Turkish territory, they seem to be aiming for a mutual agreement that neither should actually own them.

The outcrops, about half-way between the nearest Greek island and Turkey's Bodrum peninsula, are uninhabited except for occasional visits by picnickers on summer boat cruises. For decades, if not centuries, they have been peacefully used by both sides. The Greeks say they have had unrestricted access for the long-haired black goats that can be seen fleeing the downwash from helicopter rotors. Boats from the Turkish mainland fish the seas all around.

More telling, perhaps, were the boatloads of journalists and helicopters with camera crews, since this latest Greek-Turkish crisis appears to be as much a product of media hysteria as any insecure nationalist posturing by the new government in Greece or the caretaker administration in Turkey.

After a freelance "war of the flags" last weekend be-

tween the two countries as-

serting their sovereignty to the

islets as known in Greek and

Kardak in Turkish, a new

dimension was added on Mon-

day when Greece landed uni-

ships and men with rifles.

"They must pull down their

flags, withdraw their sol-

ders and we must sit down and talk

about the future of these is-

lands," the Turkish Foreign

Minister, Deniz Baykal, said.

In Athens, the Defence Min-

ister, Gerassimos Arsenis, said:

"We do not want an escalat-

ion of the crisis. If the other side is

sincere and also wants de-

escalation, it should remove its [military] presence from the

area, from our waters, from our

air space."

Mr Baykal said there were

about 1,000 rocks in the sea

whose ownership had been left

"unclear" after the Dodecanese

archipelago in the south-east

Aegean was ceded to Greece

from Italy in 1947. Talks on

these "outcrops" were started

them always to be in conflict."

Critics drive German conductor from Prague

Gerd Albrecht, the controversial German conductor, who yesterday stormed out of his job with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, contending he had been the victim of blatant anti-German sentiment, writes ADRIAN BRIDGE.

Mr Albrecht, who in 1993 became the first non-Czech to ever to lead the orchestra, said the artistic merits of his work had never been fairly acknowledged by the Czechs and that he felt squeezed out as a result of "political narrow-mindedness".

His dramatic departure, which caps months of tension, underlined the continuing prickliness of Czech-German relations, still badly scarred by the Second World War. In an iron-

ic twist, Mr Albrecht said he had originally taken on the job out of a desire to improve bilateral relations. But he acknowledged that his period in Prague had instead served to fuel bad feelings on both sides.

Czech officials tried to play down the resignation, insisting that it was essentially a question of personalities. President Vaclav Havel said he was sorry that what should have been "artistic problems" had been turned into a political issue but added, "it is not our fault".

Mr Albrecht, who is also director of the Hamburg Opera, found international acclaim but was never warmly received in Prague, where critics often described him as second rate.

Second lawyer quits Amir case

PATRICK COCKBURN

Jerusalem

"Your negligence, the way you are handling the defence of the accused, is absolutely scandalous. Why are you looking at me with cow eyes?" asked a furious Judge Edmond Levy of Jonathan Ray Goldberg, the lawyer defending Yigal Amir.

Judge Levy later withdrew the "cow eyes" remark, but in the three days since the trial of Amir for the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, he began to have an increasingly explosive outburst of anger at the incompetence and wrangling of the defence. At one moment he shouted in exasperation at Mr Goldberg: "I have spent sleepless nights going over the evidence. I don't understand why you are not well versed in the evidence. I don't understand why you are not well versed in the law."

One explanation could be Mr Goldberg's uncertain grasp of Hebrew. An extreme right-winger who emigrated from Houston, Texas, seven years ago, Mr Goldberg wears a black



Amir: Has a better grasp of the law than his lawyer

day that he decided he could not run the defence after speaking to Amir for an hour late on Monday night.

"There is a conflict of interests between my conscience and the ideological case he wanted to present," Mr Pachter said yesterday. "He wanted to use the trial as a platform for his ideological views." The day before, Mordechai Ofri had

also dismayed Judge Levy by resigning, saying he did not have control of the case. He may have been referring to the influence of a Canadian millionaire, Sam Spodak, who is sponsoring the Amir defence.

Mr Ofri said there was difficulty in obtaining the services of expert witnesses, all of whom refused to work with the defence. The only one of the experts who agreed to see Mr Ofri would only do so at his home after midnight so his partner would not find out. Judge Levy even offered to pay Mr Ofri out of state funds to stay on. When he refused the judge said: "You managed to drive even me up the wall. I am accustomed to other standards in the courtroom."

All this is diverting attention from Amir's somewhat contradictory defence. At the start of the trial he said he wanted to crippe, not kill, the Prime Minister, but he has also tried to justify his crime ideologically and has shown pride in his technical efficiency as an assassin.

Optimism grows for N-test ban

Geneva (Reuters) — France's decision to end its nuclear testing programme should build momentum towards the agreement of a treaty this year that would ban underground blasts for ever, negotiators at the Disarmament Conference in Switzerland said yesterday.

President Jacques Chirac announced on Monday that France had completed its nuclear tests in the South Pacific after a series of six underground explosions that provoked worldwide protests.

"I'm sure this announcement will be helpful," one Western ambassador to the conference said. But many delegates remained critical, maintaining that the series of blasts at Mururoa and Fangataufa atolls should not have been undertaken in the first place.

The 38-member forum hopes to conclude its two-year negotiations for a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in the next few months so that a treaty can be opened for signature by September. President Bill Clinton called last week for the conclusion of a draft pact for the consideration, by June, of the UN General Assembly. Washington has observed a testing moratorium since 1993.

The Disarmament Conference will meet in plenary session tomorrow. Concern is likely to be voiced over a Chinese foreign ministry statement yesterday that China's programme of underground tests would continue until the CTBT comes into effect. Negotiators said that China will have to fall into step with the other four declared nuclear powers — Britain, France, Russia and the US — before a CTBT can be pieced together.

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obituaries/gazette

J. J. Cohn

J. J. Cohn – who has died just 39 days after his 100th birthday – was one of the most remarkable survivors from Hollywood's Golden Age. He was born the very month that people first paid to see moving picture.

Joe Cohn knew more about Hollywood's secrets than anyone. He was production manager at the Goldwyn studio before Goldwyn left it, even before the merger into Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in 1924. He was then appointed studio manager, working under Louis B. Mayer, Irving Thalberg and Harry Rapf. When Thalberg died, he was promoted to studio executive and he was involved in the fabulously successful *Andy Hardy* and *Dr Kildare* series. He was also one of the founding members of the Academy of Motion Pictures, Arts & Sciences.

He was nothing like his namesake Harry Cohn. Joe Cohn was extremely tough, but he was an intelligent, well-read man with a kindly streak and a warm sense of humour. Above all, he was trustworthy. The scenarist Frances Marion called him "Closed-Door Cohn – you could never get anything out of him". The Charles Higham/Kitty Kelley school of biography would have been stillborn had there been more Hollywood veterans as discreet as he. Legions of authors, documentary filmmakers, lawyers trooped to his door in the hope of finding where the bodies were buried. They were all sent away charmed but frustrated. And the secrets have died with him unless, among his collection of books on exploration, he left memoirs of his own.

Cohn had no experience in the film business in 1915 when he put an ad in the paper in New York saying he was willing to do anything. He was taken on as stenographer at the Fox Film Co and found himself working from 8.30am until 11pm. He followed the scenarist (and later director) Harry O. Hoyt when he left Fox and joined the B.A. Rolfe Co, part of the Metro Co. "I wasn't too much of a stenographer," he told me, "but I worked very hard because it was so exciting. When Hoyt joined Sam Goldwyn I went along and stayed there the rest of my life." At first a purchasing agent, Cohn was made production

manager as soon as Goldwyn took over the big studio in Culver City which had belonged to Thomas Ince.

Cohn appreciated Goldwyn's concern for higher standards. "He always strove for a measure of distinction." But he did admit that producers were a very odd lot: most were producers in name only. Goldwyn worked a good deal on *instant*, and he gave Cohn more authority than most production managers.

Hollywood was a frontier town, even in the early Twenties, and many cowboys, thrown out of work by the dissolution of the great ranches, headed for it hoping for work in westerns. Whenever they needed horsemen, companies hired cowboys. Cohn was shooting night stuff for a picture called *In the Palace of the King* (1922). "We had 150 horses and the leaders got drunk," he said. "They wanted more money for the horses. I said, 'We're not going to pay. Send the leaders to me.' Instead of the three leaders, all 150 came charging right at me. I couldn't run. What was I going to do? We had a discussion. We gave them more money. I wasn't going to fight with no 150 drunks. But I picked out the ones that caused all the trouble and made sure they didn't get back."

Cohn's greatest challenge was the production of the 1925 *Ben-Hur*, which began at the Goldwyn Company.

"It's the easiest thing in the world to make a cheap picture," said Cohn. "You just say you don't do this and you don't do that. It's when you try to make a good picture inexpensively – that's when you need brains instead of money."

There was no possibility that *Ben-Hur* would be inexpensive. For a start, the cost of the rights had been crippling. Then Cohn was sent to Europe with Major Bowes, an executive. Cohn concluded the film could not be made in Europe for any reasonable figure unless it was turned over to a foreign country and no American personnel were sent over. "That way we can't be hurt. Otherwise it won't be under a million," Cohn was summoned to meet Fred Gondol, the armaments millionaire who had taken over the studio from Sam Goldwyn. "He told me, 'Bowes thinks we can make



Cohn (left), with the director Rowland Lee at the Goldwyn studio in 1921. Cohn was then 25

Photograph: Kevin Brownlow Collection

it for \$670,000 in Europe, bringing people over.' I said, 'It will never be done.' I never forgot his words. 'That's Bowes' worry.' I wanted to say, 'Yes, but it's your money. I was too young. I didn't have the audacity.'

Cohn was right. *Ben-Hur* was made in Italy. When the Goldwyn company merged with Metro and Mayer, Irving Thalberg and Louis B. Mayer inherited the mare's nest that had been made of it. The company was pulled out of Italy, and the picture largely reshot at Culver City, where a new Circus Maximus was constructed for the chariot race. Cohn was involved in all was soaring over budget on

The Merry Widow, the same year as *Ben-Hur*. "He was a great director who lost track of time when he became involved in a film. The odd thing was, we had many differences, but when he was taken off the picture I was ill with pneumonia. He said, 'Wouldn't you know, when I'm in the greatest trouble, my friend Joe Cohn isn't here.'

I liked Joe Cohn very much,

but I couldn't understand why

so creative and authoritative a

man didn't become a director

himself. "They asked me to be a producer, and I said no, I don't think I'm creative enough. (This was in the post-Thalberg era). In retrospect, I think I'm as creative as those who are getting by. But that wasn't my idea of what a producer should be. I became an executive and, you see, we could have been wrong."

"It seems to me," I said, "that directors at MGM were cooks, who were given a set of ingredients and did the best they could. But the people in control were producers."

"There is no doubt as to that. There were directors you paid a great deal of attention to and there were directors who might have been plumbers."

"But you kept them on."

"Yes, because they had a value. This business has never been blessed with a superfluity of creative talent. Today there's an enormous dearth of it. All you have to do is look at the films."

"In the mid 1920s, MGM had a stunning array of directorial talent – including Josef von Sternberg and William Wellman. Yet you fired both of them."

"Von Sternberg made quite

a poor film. I didn't have any time to do with firing him. Wellman was a new director, who found himself later. Of course, we could have been wrong."

Cohn thought further about

my original question. "I had no desire at all to direct," he said. "Maybe it was an inferiority complex. I don't know. I didn't think I'd be as good as, say, King Vidor. Might have been, I don't know."

And then came what to me was a revelation: "I had enormous respect for these people."

Thereupon Cohn embarked on a fascinating discourse in which he lauded the talents of some of the unsung heroes of the day – and some of the great names as well. It was music to my ears – to hear that a man from the production side had such a profound understanding of the craft of directing. No wonder MGM, for all its creative conflict, turned out so many of the finest films ever made.

Kevin Brownlow

Joseph Judson Cohn, film producer; born 23 December 1895; died Beverly Hills, California 12 January 1996.

Burne Hogarth

To use the American term "comic strip", or the British variant "strip cartoon", when describing Burne Hogarth's pictorial version of Edgar Rice Burroughs' immortal jungle hero Tarzan of the Apes, is to demonstrate yet again the poverty of our descriptive vocabulary.

Perhaps the finest drawing ever to decorate American coloured Sunday comic supplements went unnoticed and unclaimed by all but fellow professionals and a few comic collectors during the strip's heyday in the Thirties and Forties, and it was not until the French academics, with their love of lauding icons of popular arts such as the cinema, turned their attention to what they called *la bande dessinée* that Hogarth received his first accolade. They dubbed him "The Michelangelo of the Comics".

Burne Hogarth was born in Chicago, Illinois, on Christmas Day 1911. When he was 12 years old his father, much impressed by the boy's sketching, gathered up a folder full of pencil and crayon pictures and took Burne and the bunch to the famous Chicago Art Institute. Burne became the youngest pupil in

their Saturday class. As a teenager he studied art history and anthropology at Crane College, at North Western University in Chicago, and later at Columbia University, New York. This heavy foundation course in art proper is rare indeed for a strip cartoonist: indeed the ambition to draw newspaper strips was the last thing on Hogarth's mind.

"My generation looked down with contempt upon the comics because they reflected the social conditions of their times," Hogarth once confessed. "For the sophisticates of the time it was like owning a lower-class passport." However, he did admit to enjoying as a small child the fairy-tale cartoon adventures of *The Brownies* by Palmer Cox. Hogarth was only 13 when he became a junior cartoonist for the Associated Editors Syndicate, his first job being a single picture series entitled *Famous Chances of the World*.

His first venture into drawing comic strips was called *Hy Hemmawhak*, but it was no great success. For yet another syndicate he drew a factual panel called *Odd Occupations* and *Strange Accidents*. which was clearly inspired by Robert

their Saturday class.

Ripley's world famous series *Believe It Or Not*.

A second plunge into strips came in 1935 when he illustrated a popular pirate serial, *Pieces of Eight*, scripted by the American novelist Charles Driscoll.

Fate finally struck in 1937 when Harold Foster, until that time perhaps the best artist working in strips, decided to leave *Tarzan of the Apes*, which he had been drawing for some years at United Features.

Inspired to try his hardest, Hogarth submitted a sample page and was immediately hired.

The first Hogarth *Tarzan* was published on 9 May 1937. His drawing style, originally faithful to that of Foster, soon developed into something truly original.

Hogarth's page layouts were brilliantly different from the traditional 12 neat panels.

They staggered around the broadsheet page, their sizes drawn to fit whatever dynamic image Hogarth envisaged, from oblongs, both upright and landscape, to vast action panoramas.

His words formed part of the design within the frames, but never interfered with his illustrations. He also avoided the traditional speech balloons,



AS THE BEAST CAME ROARING AT HIM, TARZAN MOVED TO MEET THE ATTACK. WAVING OFF THE CIRCLING ARMS

The Michelangelo of the Comics: Hogarth first started drawing his Tarzan strip in 1937

placing dialogue inside the stretches of text.

Hogarth continued with *Tarzan* for eight years, over 400 full pages in all, before giving up his syndicate's restrictions.

He created a new character of his own, *Drago*, for their rival the Hall Syndicate, a serial set in Argentina depicting the hero's battles against the Nazi Baron Zodiac. It was not a great success, and nor was a second

strip, *Miracle Jones*, a Walter-Mitty-style comic hero.

In 1947 Hogarth left strips to found the School of Visual Arts, which is now perhaps the most comprehensive centre of commercial and fine art training in the United States. He retired in 1970 to devote himself to painting and writing. His several books include *Dynamic Anatomy*, but as far as they are more will prefer his definitive 1972 pictorial version of *Tarzan*

of the Apes, an original work depicting the Burroughs book in great exactitude. This year Burne Hogarth was the official Guest of Honour at the Annual International Comic Art Festival at Angoulême in France. He died in Paris while on his way home.

Denis Gifford

Burne Hogarth, cartoonist; born Chicago 25 December 1911; died Paris 28 January 1996.

Eric Cousins

Eric Cousins, feared by the bookies for his coups, was one of Britain's shrewdest trainers. He changed the face of racing by introducing to the sport his neighbour, the man from the pools, Robert Sangster.

Cousins' first really big "touch" was with the first Sangster horse, Robert's wedding present to his wife, Chalk Stream, bought by Cousins for £1,000 from Sir Foster Robinson, whose grandson Nick has long been Sangster's valued friend and partner. Narrowly beaten in the 1959 Lincoln Chalk Stream had been cleverly placed by Cousins until the day of the big gamble.

The chosen race was the 1961 running of Kempton Park's famous one-and-a-quarter-mile Great Jubilee Handicap, so beloved by the old gambling trainers like Artie Persie, who won it six times. Top weight with 9st 5lb had the French challenger Prince Ali Khan's handsome chestnut Sallymount ridden by the Australian star Neville Sellwood. Chalk Stream, with two stone less, piloted by the apprentice Brian Lee, had been a slightly dodgy starter on several occasions.

So, on his trainer's instructions, the 24-year-old Sangster stationed himself on the rails by the bookmakers, looking up at the top of the stand where Cousins was positioned with a clear view of the start. If Chalk Stream jumped off all right, he would have been wrong.

Cousins' stable jockey was the chosen race was the 1961 running of Kempton Park's famous one-and-a-quarter-mile Great Jubilee Handicap, so beloved by the old gambling trainers like Artie Persie, who won it six times. Top weight with 9st 5lb had the French challenger Prince Ali Khan's handsome chestnut Sallymount ridden by the Australian star Neville Sellwood. Chalk Stream, with two stone less, piloted by the apprentice Brian Lee, had been a slightly dodgy starter on several occasions.

Thereupon Cohn embarked on a fascinating discourse in which he lauded the talents of some of the unsung heroes of the day – and some of the great names as well. It was music to my ears – to hear that a man from the production side had such a profound understanding of the craft of directing. No wonder MGM, for all its creative conflict, turned out so many of the finest films ever made.

After having served as a pilot in the RAF during the war Eric Cousins rode 50 winners as an amateur over obstacles between 1950 and 1957. In 1954 he began training at Rangemore near Burton-on-Trent in Staffordshire and achieved his first important success with Bonhomie in the Ascot Stakes of 1957.

After moving to Tarporley in Cheshire during the 1960 season he earned the reputation for turning out winners of the most important handicaps, having landed the Kempton Jubilee for Lord Derby, the colt was very successful. Smith declared: "Every time Tudor Treasure wins I feel as though someone has stabbed me in the back."

Cousins' stable jockey was George Cadwaladr, who had been his apprentice. "He never tied me down with instructions," Cadwaladr said. "Ride it as you find it as long as you go with them, they are going too fast" was one of his favourite expressions.

Eric Cousins retired from training in 1977, but he continued to farm at Tarporley. He died while bathing in the sea of Barbados.

Tim FitzGeorge-Parker

Eric Cousins, racehorse trainer; born 12 December 1921; married 1943 Patricia Reay (three sons, one daughter); died Barbados 27 January 1996.

Joseph Brodsky

Joseph Brodsky took to the US like a thrill-deprived kid might take to the Dipper at Blackpool.

I met him in Boston in May 1989, when I'd gone to the States for my daughter's graduation from Dartmouth College. I was, at that time, still living under police custody in England with Salman Rushdie, but the event was too important to miss. I flew to the States unannounced, but before I went Salman and I called Derek Walcott in Boston to tell him I was coming. When I got to Boston, I went to see Derek and Joseph was there.

Two days later Joseph depicted some of his heady vintage devilry under a faultless New England sky for America's Ivy League youth. His speech was a cry against boredom, exploring callow souls not to rage so much against the dying of the light, as against daytime TV. His message was lost on Dartmouth. They expected a bunglegum speech; what they got was a nicotine hit and a blast of Siberian air. When the ceremony ended, no one came to thank him. He stepped off the stage and took off the pastel-board and strode across the college green, his robe flapping and lit up a Marlboro. Groovy.

He adored making puns – a lot of them bad – in American English. He dug it. He took such delight in English puns, in fact, he would often risk a picket of the tongue or prose to include one. There was never any point in trying to advise Joseph not to do something for the sake of preserving its perfection or its health. Joseph was not a conservator – or he would still be here today. After his first heart operation, only the most obtuse of his friends tried to advise him

to give up the smoke. Forget it – he had purchased a boy's lifetime pass on the Dipper.

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for unitary authorities throughout the country, with one boundary change. The Secretary of State considered the boundary change unnecessary to facilitate the structural change which he was prepared to implement. His order gave effect to all the commission's structural changes having modified the area in which one of structural changes was to take effect. That could not be how section 17 was intended to operate.

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J. V. 15/1/96

comment

How to collect a windfall inheritance

The elderly are offloading assets to avoid paying for care. But why should the state pick up the bill?

Mr D of Mid Glamorgan chuckles with satisfaction. He hasn't won a lot of money, he has given away a lot. It was partly generosity, but it was also revenge on the state for cheating him. He is one of the growing hordes of elderly people rushing to give away their assets to their children for fear that they will otherwise be stripped of them to pay for long-term care should they need to enter a home.

Mr D, 77, is not a rich man. He and his wife had a house worth £44,000, which they handed over to their two married daughters two years ago. Mrs D is increasingly disabled and found the stairs difficult, so they applied to the council, which, astonishingly, gave them a council home for £35 a week. Their daughters are selling the old house. This is modest wealth cascading down the generations, as promised by John Major.

Today the Law Society is sending out bundles of guidance to solicitors, inviting them to seminars on how to advise elderly clients who are queuing up for help in avoiding future care charges. Age Concern has been flooded with inquiries in recent months after news that 40,000 old people's houses have been seized by social services in the past year.

The law says that anyone with assets of more than £16,000 will be charged fees for their residential or nursing home. The money is usually taken from the value of their homes. The wheeze of giving everything away in advance has to be well planned, and even then the law is far from clear. If social services smell a rat, they can accuse someone of having "deliberately deprived"

themselves of their money in order to make a claim upon the state. If the money is given away six months before the old person goes into a home, at a time when they were reasonably fit, then they may get away with it. If not, the money can be reclaimed from the person to whom it was given.

The Law Society's guidelines tell solicitors that there is "no foolproof way of avoiding the value of the home being taken into account in means-testing. Generally, the intention behind the gift is the most important factor."

They warn that as local authorities discover this huge flight of capital from elderly parents to children they will get tougher. Under the Insolvency Act, the state can claim back money given at any time if the intent was to avoid paying.

Then there is the King Lear problem. Do you trust your children? Itching to get their hands on the money, they might decide that perhaps you would be happier in a nice, cosy old folks' home, so they can sell the house that is now in their name. The Law Society warns solicitors "to ensure your clients fully understand the risks and consequences" and to assess whether they are "subject to undue influence from family and friends". There have already been cases of bitter regret and family rows.

Mr D's motivation was mainly to ensure that his daughters got the benefit of his life's savings. But he also burns with political indignation. He used to be a minor NHS administrator. "I paid my taxes all my life and I expected to be paid for if we needed care," he says. "That was the deal. But

they have shut down two hospitals in this area, with a lot of beds for the elderly, turning them out of the NHS to make them pay in private homes. I won't do it."

This is the grey rebellion that both the Government and Labour fear. "Can pay but damned if we will" is the new grey slogan. The law has not changed since the 1948 National Assistance Act, which said clearly that those who could afford it should pay for any non-NHS care. But two things have changed: the NHS has all but withdrawn from free long-term care; and at the same time many more old people have got rich. According to the General Household Survey, more than 60 per cent of households over 65 are owner-occupiers.

Afraid of the angry grey vote, politicians are rushing to find ways to protect the principle of inheritance. Frank Field MP has a scheme, and this week

the left-wing Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) published a menu of plans with varying degrees of state subsidy.

The scale of the problem looks frightening. Average stay before death in a nursing home is two, or three in a residential home, at a total cost of £30,000 to £40,000. The state's contribution stands at 1.8 per cent of national income, but by 2031 it will be 5 per cent – not a burden that taxpayers present or future will be willing to pay. So private cover looks like the only answer.

But is it? To pay into a fund over a lifetime would be exceedingly expensive. Younger people struggling with mortgage and family find a pension hard to pay. Care insurance would seem crazily irrelevant. And they would be right. Everyone retires, but only one in 20 old people ever goes into a home. The rest die in their beds or in hospital after a brief illness.

We are a nation of gamblers, and those are pretty good odds. Pay nothing and hope for the best. If the worst comes to the worst and you go into care, you will have to sell your home and you won't get to hand on your money to your children.

But do they really need it? They will probably be in their fifties, with most of their mortgage paid. So what do they need the money for, except what's old? Old people remembering the hardship of their own earlier days often imagine their children worse off than they are. The money will usually go on foreign holidays and a better car, while the taxpayer picks up the care bill that the family should have paid.

If, like Mr D, you are angry with the

state for failing to keep its cradle-to-grave promise, the other option is to spend, spend, spend. Blow the lot, cruise and booze, winter in the Costa del Sol, buy yourself a floozy or a gigolo, have fun.

That is, of course, antisocial advice.

But many old people now rushing to their solicitors to divest themselves of their money should pause for thought.

Why should the taxpayer fork out? It is no good whingeing about welfare state promises made 50 years ago. The state can't pay and that's that. Instead,

remember that all life is a lottery, good health above all. Your children have a 19 out of 20 chance of casting in when you die, but they could be unlucky. Tough.

This week's IPPR scheme, the most imaginative so far, would spread the risk among pensioners. On retirement they would surrender a portion of the value of their house (estimated at 45 per cent of an average home valued at £60,000). The money would only be realised by the insurance company on your death, or if you went into a home – in which case the company would cover all your bills. The rest of the value would pass to your heirs. But at 20 to one, wouldn't the gamble be the wiser course?

Some 30 per cent of pensioners will always be poor, never having earned enough for a pension, let alone care insurance, so the state will always have to pay for them, one way or another. But the rest who have capital will simply have to pay up, if the fickle finger of fate points at them. Now all we need is for politicians of any party to be brave enough to stand up and tell them so.

Making student loans pay off

Gareth Roberts proposes a solution to the universities' funding crisis

We are not proposing that the levy be introduced until 1997. The size of the levy would be determined by the size of the government cuts for that year.

We would prefer to continue to offer courses to full-time students at no cost to themselves. If a contribution is to be made, we would prefer a proper loan scheme enabling graduates to repay their contribution according to their ability to pay.

This suggested levy is in no sense a substitute for a proper funding scheme. Indeed, if we could see measurable progress to a longer-term solution, we would rescind the levy immediately. However, we have to balance our budgets like any other organisation.

The levy would not apply to further cuts will have a serious effect on quality

part-time students and others who already pay their fees, and we would use part of the income to bolster support access arrangements for poorer students.

It is neither in the country's interest, nor that of the universities, to damage the quality of our service. Not only is it vital that we continue to produce world-class graduates, but it is also important that UK universities continue to attract students from around the world.

There is a solution to this dilemma of maintaining quality in the light of increasing pressures on public funding. It is one which vice-chancellors have been pressing on all political parties for the past two or three years. The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals has proposed a new system of loans which would enable graduates to pay back part of the costs of their education, according to the income they earn after they have left university.

Not only would this help to relieve pressure on public funding, but it would also provide a support scheme for part-time students and others who already pay their own tuition fees.

This idea is already operating in other countries, notably Australia, where it has not limited either the number of university applicants or the range of people applying to take a university course. What is frustrating for vice-chancellors is that none of the principal political parties seems to have the courage to explore the idea.

Until this nettle is grasped, we have no option but to consider how we can decrease costs or increase income.

At our meeting on Friday, my executive committee and I will be proposing two measures with great reluctance.

The first is to increase income by introducing a special registration levy on new students as they enter university.

The writer is vice-chancellor of the University of Sheffield and chairman of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals.

Out of the Irish cul-de-sac

The British government must reappraise its response to the Mitchell report, argues Garret Fitzgerald

The British government's reaction to last week's Mitchell report on decommissioning of paramilitary arms has been greeted in nationalist Ireland with a combination of incredulity and anger. To many people in Britain, in turn, this seems an excessive, even perverse, response to what has been presented as a simple proposal to hold a democratic election in Northern Ireland. As so often in the past, a gulf of misunderstanding now divides our two peoples.

The Mitchell commission has been widely seen as a means of getting the British government off its self-imposed hook of requiring a start to arms decommissioning as a precondition for the commencement of all-party talks – a precondition the IRA had never been prepared to concede. If the Mitchell recommendations enabled this precondition to be bypassed, the way would be clear to implement the solemnly agreed "firm aim" of the two governments to initiate – by the end of February – all-party talks in which Sinn Fein would be included.

The immediate Irish reaction to the Mitchell report was enthusiastic because it seemed to show a way through the deadlock that for almost 18 months had held up negotiations towards a Northern Ireland settlement. The report recognised explicitly that "the reality with which all concerned must deal [is that] decommissioning prior to such negotiations ... will not happen", and recommended instead that the parties "should affirm their total and absolute commitment" to ste democratic principles.

These principles (see below) were particularly welcomed in Ireland because for the first time they would pin down Sinn Fein, and through it the IRA, to a totally democratic agenda, free of the ambiguities that have hitherto marked all utterances from these sources. When taken in conjunction with a proposal for some decommissioning during the negotiating process – instead of at the end of it, as Sinn Fein had sought to insist – these principles seemed a potentially acceptable substitute for the unrealistic precondition that decommissioning should start before the talks began.

Difficult though it might be for Sinn Fein and the IRA to swallow this unpalatable Mitchell package, the initial



Martin McGuinness (left) and Gerry Adams yesterday

Photograph: Pacemaker

starting talks at the end of February should be subverted by making the time-consuming implementation of such an electoral process a precondition for the start of these talks.

The Mitchell principles would pin down Sinn Fein, and through it the IRA, to a totally democratic agenda

Within the all-party framework the Irish side would want to tease out several problems and dangers that could arise from the establishment of an elected body in Northern Ireland at this stage. These include the potentially adversarial character, and capacity for filibustering, of an elected body

such an elected body an attempt might be made by Unionists to wrest control of the North/South strand of the all-party negotiations from the two governments, with a view to blocking North/South co-operation.

An attempt has been made

to suggest that the introduction

of this fresh delaying precondition for all-party talks is compatible with, or even part of, the Mitchell recommendations. But this is simply not true.

The report's only reference to elections in Northern Ireland is confined to the carefully worded statement that "if it were broadly acceptable, with an appropriate mandate, and within the three-strand structure, an elective process could contribute to the building of confidence".

Despite a belated attempt by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on Monday to suggest that the British government has "accepted all the recommendations in the Mitchell report", the fact is that for the moment at least it has rejected them – a point which Sir Patrick Mayhew himself had inadvertently conceded in the Commons last Thursday when he justified the Government's stance on the grounds that "I happen to know that Unionists will not be there on the terms that have been put forward by Mitchell" (my emphasis).

Where can we go from here? There seem to be some grounds for believing that the British government may not initially have intended to take such a negative position on the Mitchell recommendation. It seems the original intention

may have been for the Secretary of State to make a holding statement in the Commons last Wednesday. The Prime Minister's decision to make a more definitive statement himself may have been precipitated by fears of reactions within his own party to a damaging leak of the commission's report in a Dublin paper last Wednesday morning.

This was accompanied by speculation that unhelpfully presented the anticipated British government acceptance of the Mitchell recommendations as a "climbdown".

If in fact the British government's reaction to the report was motivated by short-term considerations of this kind rather than being the fruit of considered strategy, then second thoughts might open the way for some modification of its apparent new election precondition to the start of the all-party talks.

The British government will certainly be under strong American pressure to find some way out of this new cul-de-sac as, indeed, has already been suggested by Mr Mitchell's statement after his meeting with President Clinton on Monday that "The President ... hoped that the parties would reach agreement and allow the talks to take place as scheduled", viz by the end of February.

A possible way ahead would be for the Mitchell principles to be accepted by all, and for talks involving all the parties to take place soon on the issue of a possible role for an electoral process. Then, if some progress could be made with this proposal, all-party talks on the actual issues could start at the end of February, accompanied, as suggested by the Mitchell report, by some decommissioning of arms.

The writer was Prime Minister of Ireland from 1981 to 1987.

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Let me sing in my own country

ANOTHER VIEW

Bryn Terfel

producing fine singers. In recent memory, Stuart Burrows, the late Sir Geralin Evans, Margaret Price and Dame Gwyneth Jones have all enjoyed major international careers. Wales also has, in Welsh National Opera, a company that in a relatively short period of time has established standards of performance that are the equal of many more famous and longer established opera companies. Yet, despite this cultural heritage, we are not able to provide Welsh National Opera with the permanent venue it deserves and which is capable

of staging opera on a scale that is possible in most of the other capital cities of Europe. The country that has contributed so much to the world of opera could be destined to remain the poor relation in terms of being able to use the fine singers it produces. I had been discussing the possibility of being involved in the open-

The Wagner repertoire is something I shall be moving into over the coming years, yet the current facilities

available to Welsh National Opera at the New Theatre in Cardiff and other relatively small theatres in the provinces, make it impossible to stage.

I have a very full diary of engagements over the next six to seven years, and that there is little possibility of a return to Wales for my roles in future is very sad. There are other possibilities, including an offer from the Metropolitan Opera in New York for the time I would have spent performing *Dutchman* in Cardiff. But I know where I would rather be on St David's Day in the year 2000 – on home soil.

The author is an international bass-baritone.

Price applies to a 3 month order inc. VAT.

Kirkdale

Hanson to break up into four companies

TOM STEVENSON

City Editor

Hanson is to break itself up in a stunning acknowledgment that the logic which drove the diversified group for 30 years is no longer working.

The tobacco, chemicals, energy and building group, that more than any other company grew to epitomise the deal-splitting 1980s, is to end its life as a conglomerate within a year, demerging itself into four separately quoted companies.

Lord Hanson, who founded his eponymous empire through the 1965 reverse takeover of a small agricultural supplier, said: "We are making this exciting and radical move to create even greater management and growth opportunities, to improve the operations, profitability and long-term prospects of these four big businesses."

That gloss was not shared by the company's observers, however, who have viewed the break-up as confirmation of the failure of the very concept of conglomerates, one of the dominant corporate ideas of the past three decades. In keeping with the rest of the diversified industrial sector, Hanson has consistently underperformed the rest of the stock market since the beginning of the 1990s as investors switched into more focused groups.

Despite yesterday's 7p rise in the share price to 211.5p, Hanson's shares are worth less today than at the beginning of 1990. Over the past five years, they have lost 35 per cent of their value relative to the wider market.

The demerger, masterminded by merchant bank Rothschilds, is bound to create a bonanza in professional fees. It is the largest corporate break-up since ICI spun off Zeneca in 1993 and will create four companies, all with sales of more than £2bn. Hanson shareholders will receive shares in each.

Imperial Group, the Embassy and Lamberts & Butler tobacco group which Hanson acquired in 1986 at the height of the group's expansion, will regain its stock market quote. Eastern Group, the former regional electricity company, re-

turns to the stock market as part of an energy business that takes in Peabody Coal of the US. There will also be a stand-alone chemicals company, comprising SCM, recent acquisition Quantum and the remaining stake in Suburban Propane.

The Hanson name will live on as a rump building materials business whose principal subsidiaries include ARC, Hanson Brick and the company's 12.5 per cent stake in the National Grid. It will be the only one of the four companies to be chaired by Lord Hanson, who confirmed that he would step down as planned in 1997. With the succession still unresolved in the core business, attention focused again on the role of Lord Hanson's son, Robert.

The break-up is a victory for Derek Bonham, Hanson's chief executive and the proposed chairman of Imperial and the energy company. Like many of his peers in the sector, he has long argued for a narrowing of Hanson's interests and was a driving force behind the demerger of US Industries.

Mr Bonham said yesterday: "The USI demerger demonstrated that increased focus works and I am sure it will work for us. However, this is a gigantic exercise and although we've started that work, much more lies ahead."

The complexity of the deal is increased by the Anglo-American balance of Hanson, created by the 1973 move to the US of co-founder Lord White and always touted as one of the conglomerate's greatest strengths.

The listings of the newly-created companies will also be split between the US and Britain.

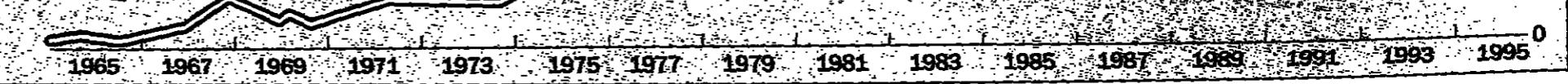
Hanson, often accused of asset-stripping and failing to invest in its subsidiaries, has always seen itself as a maximiser or liberator of shareholder value locked into underperforming companies.

In its hey-day the company rode on the back of an unmatched deal-making reputation as Lord Hanson and Lord White, who died last August, created a transatlantic group with interests ranging from tobacco to timber. But its market rating languished as its earnings growth ran into the sand.



Starting out

James Hanson and Gordon White take time out from their flamboyant playboy lives to reverse into the Wiles Group, a small agricultural supplier with capital of less than £500,000. They set up headquarters in Cheltenham and change name to Hanson Trust. Heavily influenced by financier Jim Stiles, Hanson begins a sequence of opportunistic acquisitions that would create a great but ultimately flawed business empire. From the outset, the group moves into areas it knows little about, interested only in dealing companies rather than running them.



Hanson: The high life and slow death of a conglomerate

The US years

The early 1970s were a bleak period for buccaneering free-marketeers such as White and Hanson. Gordon White, especially, despaired of Britain's Industrial Relations and Edward Heath's infamous U-turn. When he introduced a statutory pay and prices policy and described rival industrialist Tony Rowland as "the unacceptable face of capitalism", White was also on his uppers, leveraged up to the eyebrows and technically insolvent. In 1973 he ran to New York and started what would become Hanson Inc, arguably the heating of the group.

The Mega-bids

The relative decline of Hanson began a lot earlier than most observers realised, ironically it began with the 1984 purchase of London Brick, the first of a string of increasingly large deals that were to shore up the increasingly unsustainable edifice. That deal was followed over the next five years by the acquisitions of SCM in chemicals, Imperial Tobacco, Peabody, Consolidated and Eveready. To keep the giant moving, the deals grew ever larger until the ultimate act of hubris, the 1991 bid at ICI. Britain's bellwether stock, a public relations disaster.

The end game

The 1993 acquisition of Quantum, a triumph of timing, suggested a return to form. But the purchase last year of Eastern Group, the regional electricity company, confirmed the group was running out of ideas. The demerger of US Industries was the first betrayal of the conglomerate's *raison d'être* and marked the beginning of the breakup. Lord White's death last year was the final blow. The conglomerate had run its course.

Source: Datstream

-0.25

-0.20

-0.15

-0.10

-0.05

0

Share price relative to the market

The fractured legacy of a 30-year-old empire

CHEMICALS

Put together over the past 10 years since the 1986 acquisition of SCM, the chemicals company will also include successful recent acquisition Quantum and the 35 per cent of Suburban Propane left over from last year's flotation of the domestic gas company.

Rising American star Bill Landuyt will be chairman and chief executive of the New York quoted business. Sales in the year to September 1995 of £2.02bn yielded operating profits of £591m.

The return of a familiar name to the stock market, a bitter final twist to an acrimonious 1986 bid. Britain's second largest manufacturer of tobacco products, its principal brands include, Regal, Embassy, John Player Special and Lambert & Butler.

Derek Bonham takes the chair with Ronald Fulford as chief executive. Sales last year were £3.57bn with operating profits of £348m.

A creation of the 1990s, the new company puts the American coal mining operations of Peabody, Southern Ohio Coal and Coal of Eastern Group, the former regional electricity company. Management of the group is split between Eastern former head John Devaney and Irl Engelhardt from Peabody. Derek Bonham oversees as chairman. Energy would have made profits of £460m from sales of £3.53bn had it been a part of the group for the full year.

IMPERIAL

ENERGY

HANSON

The name lives on as a focused building materials and equipment group, with sales of £2.3bn giving operating profits of £286m. Lord Hanson holds onto the chair until his planned retirement next year. Christopher Collins is his deputy with former finance director Andrew Dougal chief executive. Subsidiary companies include ARC, Cornerstone Construction, crane business Grove, Hanson Brick and Hanson's holding in the National Grid.

Slowdown signals send Wall Street to record

DIANE COYLE

Economics Correspondent

New signs of economic slowdown in the US delighted the financial markets yesterday – sending shares on Wall Street to a new record and the lifting of the dollar to its highest level for nearly two years.

Hopes that the US Federal Reserve will cut interest rates today at the end of a key policy meeting were boosted by news of sluggish retail sales at Christmas and a drop in consumer confidence to its lowest level for almost two years.

The Dow Jones index jumped more than 50 points by midday to a new high of 5,355.56. The dollar climbed nearly a yen to ¥107.30, a 23-month high against the Japanese currency and headed above

DM1.49 from DM1.4813, helped by worries about the state of the German economy.

Despite the market euphoria, economists are divided about whether the Fed will act to stimulate the economy today.

Josh Feinman, an economist at Bankers Trust, said: "Consumer spending was sluggish in the fourth quarter. This keeps the Fed in easing mode." However, he said the central bank might wait until its next policy meeting on 26 March.

The Fed cut its key Federal Funds rate by a quarter point to 5.5 per cent on 19 December, the first reduction since last July.

Separately, further signs that the Japanese economy is on the path to recovery took shares in Tokyo to a 17 month high yesterday. Figures on vacancies and unemployment were slightly

better than expected. The Nikkei index rose more than 133 points to 20,722.44.

Retail sales in the US crept up by only 0.3 per cent in December, despite savage price cuts in the run up to Christmas. The increase was less than analysts had predicted, and was anyway inflated by a surge in car sales – itself smaller than expected. The 4.9 per cent growth in retail sales last year as a whole was the slowest since 1991, at the end of the recession.

American consumer confidence this month has fallen to its lowest since March 1994, according to the Conference Board. The confidence index fell to 87.0 from 99.2 in December. The recent blizzards and the government shutdown were both said to have contributed to the big decline.

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over-reaction", saying that it followed normal procedures in warning electricity firms that there could be problems ahead if the cold weather continued.

Ofgas has asked British Gas's pipeline arm, TransCo, to break its supply to some customers were justified at a time when there is plenty of gas available in the marketplace.

Ofgas is thought to have sent two separate requests for in-

Senior KPMG partner earned £740,000

ROGER TRAPP

Colin Sharman, senior partner of KPMG, was paid a total of nearly £740,000 in the year to September 1995, according to the first publication of a leading accountancy firm's financial results.

The package was made up of "executive remuneration" of £438,000 for doing the job of senior partner, £125,000 of pension contributions and "proprietorship profit" of £176,753. Some speculation had put Mr Sharman's earnings rather higher, with some suggesting that the figure might be more than £1m.

Details of the pay scales are disclosed for the first time today in the firm's accounts. These showed one person receiving executive remuneration of between £350,000 and £375,000 and two receiving between £325,000 and £350,000.

The average total profit share for each of the 565 partners was

£180,000 – made up of £125,000 executive remuneration, proprietorship profit of £31,000 and £24,000 in pension contributions. Pre-tax profits at the firm fell 28 per cent, to £17.9m, in the year on revenue up 6.8 per cent at £888.7m.

The firm said the fall in profits reflected "the competitive nature

of our marketplace and our continuing investment in people and services". The cost of professional indemnity insurance cover had also gone up, while future profits would be hit by the costs of incorporation, particularly having to pay National Insurance contributions on partners' earnings, it added.

The publication of the accounts is part of KPMG's plan to make its audit arm a limited liability company in an attempt to stave off a bankruptcy-threatening legal action.

Mr Sharman accepted that most people would feel that his earnings were high and said he did not want to suggest that he and his colleagues were panthers. But he added that he thought many would have expected the figures to be higher.

This is not a bonanza," he said, pointing out that the proportion of staff earning more than £100,000 a year – between 500-600 out of a total of 8,500

was a much smaller proportion than in merchant banks, for example.

Equally, it is generally accepted that senior lawyers' pay is much higher. According to the latest estimates from Legal Business magazine, profits per partner at two City firms are nearly £400,000.

One factor holding back the partners' take-home pay that is not fully explained in the accounts is the capital contributions they have to make. These start from the time a partner is appointed and eventually reach six figures.

The money is repaid on the partner's retirement – but without interest. This means that partners do not enjoy the opportunities for capital growth available to directors of merchant banks or public companies, who can benefit from stock options.

Mr Sharman believes that this is one reason increasing numbers of partners at accountancy firms are leaving to become finance directors of banks and other corporations.

Though KPMG had lost four such people in recent months, changing the ethos of the organisation would take it away from the key role of providing a service.



No pauper: Colin Sharman, senior partner of KPMG

Watchdog investigates British Gas supply cuts

MARY FAGAN

Industrial Correspondent

Ofgas, the gas industry watchdog, has launched an investigation into British Gas cuts in supply to power stations and other large users during the cold spell. The reductions in supplies to some power stations caused outrage and concern at the

weekend, with the National Grid Company warning of potential power cuts.

At the same time the Electricity Association, the industry's trade body, is thought to have complained to the Grid for over-estimating the possibility of power cuts and causing unnecessary alarm. The Grid said last night that it "strenuously de-

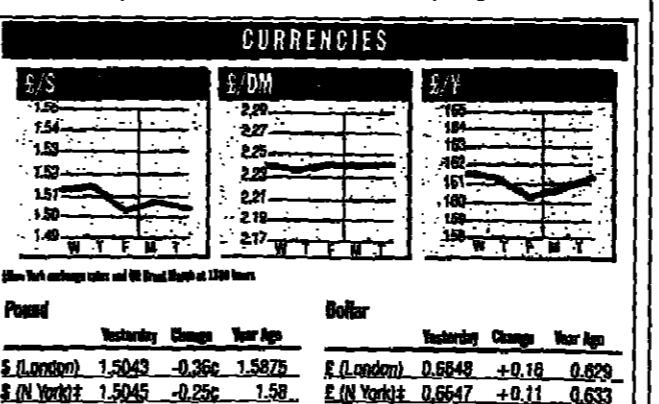
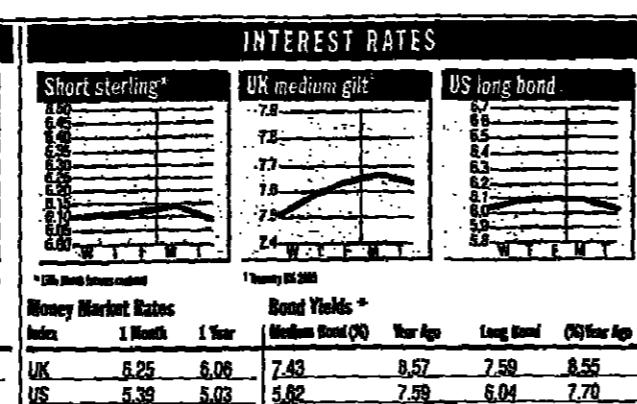
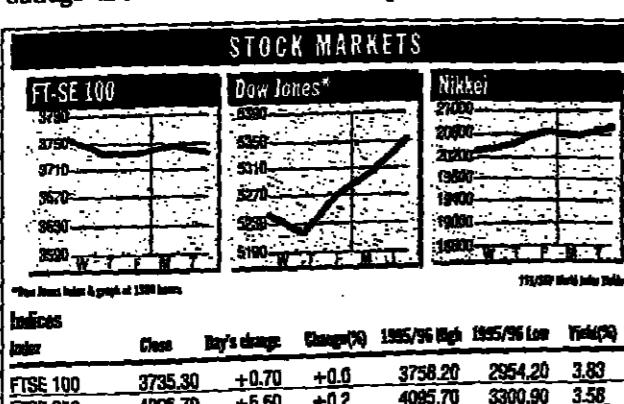
nies over-reaction", saying that it followed normal procedures in warning electricity firms that there could be problems ahead if the cold weather continued.

Ofgas is thought to have sent two separate requests for in-

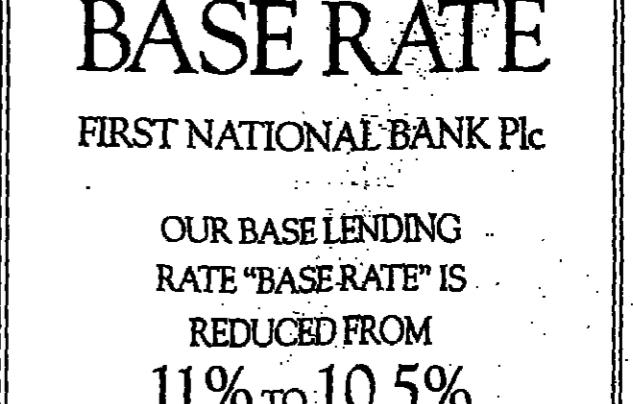
formation to TransCo after the initial response failed to address its concerns. British Gas argues that large users on the special low cost deals were warned weeks ago that "interruptible contracts are just that".

The inquiry coincides with an investigation by Ofgas, the electricity regulator, over the power station supply problems. There

is growing concern that, in the post-privatisation era, there is no one with the ultimate responsibility for keeping the lights burning. Ofgas has asked National Power, PowerGen and other generators to explain why they have fuel supply problems and whether they have backstops if there is a problem with availability of gas.



Source: FT Information



THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

Edited by TOM STEVENSON

Bonds look better than equities

A superficial reading of the latest annual BZW equity-gilt study suggests that equities should remain the sure-fire choice for investors. Last year saw a real total return from equities of 19.5 per cent, comfortably outstripping the 15.5 per cent on gilts.

On a 10- and 20-year basis, the out-performance of equities appears even more outstanding. Real returns on equities averaged 10.6 per cent a year since 1973, compared with 6 per cent for gilts.

Yet a different picture emerges for the 1990s to date, when the margin between equities and gilts has diminished substantially. Since 1990, the average annual return on gilts of 10.6 per cent has been much closer to the 12.7 per cent return on equities.

Indeed BZW says that the past 14 years have seen the longest post-war bull market in gilts. Not since the early 1930s have gilt investors had a similar home run to celebrate.

This re-rating of gilts has come mainly from declining inflationary expectations. A secondary factor is the maturing of pension funds and the effect of the Pensions Act in pushing funds to increase their weighting of bonds to comply with minimum funding requirements.

According to BZW, the scope for bonds to make further gains from lower inflation is now limited. That seems too pessimistic a view, but there is something in the argument that the main long-term impetus for gilts will now switch to expectations of real progress in curbing budget deficits.

On both counts, however, the medium-term outlook for gilts still looks a lot more promising than the prospects for equities. As the chart shows, the stock market is flirting with a degree of over-valuation not seen since the early 1970s. Indeed the deviation of almost 40 per cent is one of the largest ever recorded.

Sooner or later, the BZW trend line suggests, the equity market is likely to have a great fall. But Michael Hughes, the firm's head of global strategy, warns that these periods of over-valuation can persist for quite long periods. Demographics are on the side of the markets, as the baby-boom generation moves into its peak age for saving.

However, the political risks are growing. If and when a Labour government is elected, the signs are that they will be tougher on the public finances and inflation than is generally expected. But equities could be unsettled by the impact of the minimum wage and steps to encourage long-term

investors, not to mention a further assault on the tax privileges of pension funds by cutting the tax credit on dividend corporation tax.

In the long run, equities may be the better bet, but don't write off the chances of the bull market in gilts breaking new records. For the rest of the decade, bonds look the safer and more remunerative bet.

Texans hooked on Sotheby's

Shares in Sotheby's Holdings, the world's biggest fine art auction house, have leapt 100% since the Bass family of Texas emerged as big shareholders at the end of last week. Share-buying earlier this month has taken the Bass stake to 7.7 per cent of the low-voting A shares, sending them to 985p, an 18-month high.

This excitement is based on the past reputation of the Texas-based Bass family, who have already amassed what is described as a "modest" fortune in Texan oil and are active corporate investors.

Robert Bass, who broke with the rest of the family some years ago, has in the past made tilts at Macmillan, the US

publishing giant, and Continental Airlines, where he was linked with a bid from Air Canada in 1992.

But it is the rest of his family, led by Sid Bass, who are involved with Sotheby's and their style has been markedly different from brother Robert. Known as investors in what they see as undervalued companies, they have substantially increased their wealth by pursuing a strategy of working with existing management.

Their involvement as investors in the Walt Disney Company seems to have coincided with a period of revival at the famous entertainment group, while an investment at Quinta, a chain of US motor lodges, has also turned out well.

Sotheby's management have welcomed the increased interest from the Bass group. As well as the family's relative benevolence to incumbent management, Sotheby's board can rest safe in the knowledge that the group is protected from hostile takeover by chairman Alfred Taubman's control of the high-voting B shares.

The Basses may also have just timed their share-buying to coincide with a revival in the company's fortunes after five lean years.

At the end of December, the group reported 1995 auction sales up a quarter to \$1.66bn (£1.05bn), the fourth-

highest level on record. Even so, they remain well below the record high of \$2.9bn achieved in 1989.

Net earnings for 1995 are likely to have jumped from \$20.3m to \$31m, and are expected to rise to \$42m this year. But on a forward multiple of 20, the shares are up with events.

Fish and chips - at a price

It has been quite a week for Harry Ramsden's, the fish and chip shop group. On Monday the shares jumped 36p - or 13 per cent - when it announced a deal with Compass, the catering group, to open more branches in airports. Up to 15 restaurants will open over the next five years in locations such as Singapore and Malaga. Compass will operate the outlets while the Leeds-based chip shop group takes a percentage of revenues.

Yesterday the shares rose a further 3p to 319p on the back of good results. Harry Ramsden's may be an illiquid stock, with only 8.8 million shares in issue, but the shares have increased by a third this month alone.

Last year's figures continued what has been a very steady performance since the company joined the stock market in 1989.

Profits for the year to October jumped 21 per cent to £1.1m on sales up 16 per cent to £4.2m. This was in spite of higher potato prices, which affected margins, and the hot summer, which held back sales in some restaurants, though seaside locations such as Blackpool and Bournemouth did well.

The group has 61 restaurants, with another opening in Belfast next month. John Barnes, chairman, thinks there is room for 30 and the plan is to add more branches around the M25.

In other activities, the Ross Chip Shop chips and battered fish range has been followed up with other product launches in November.

The Henry Higgins joint venture - which concentrates on smaller outlets - also looks promising.

The Harry Ramsden's gravy train has been an enjoyable ride for investors who embarked at the beginning and have seen their investment treble. But for those who missed out the shares are looking expensive. House broker Peter Crosthwaite is forecasting profits of £1.3m for the current year, which puts the shares on a forward rating of more than 30. Enough to give anyone indigestion.

The Forte-Granada bid battle appears to be ending with a series of whimpers. No sooner has Sir Rocco Forte finished clearing his desk than Granada is moving to neutralise a potentially stormy shareholder meeting.

Part of the unsuccessful Forte defence was a planned £1.05bn sale of the Happy Eater and Little Chef restaurant chains to Whitbread.

An egg in London was expected to approve the deal tomorrow morning.

The egg appeared to many observers to provide a perfect arena for dissatisfied Forte shareholders to vent their spleen on the deal and the management's behaviour. Despite Granada's victory the meeting has to go ahead. Granada discovered that the only way legally to stop the Whitbread deal was to hold the egg and immediately adjourn it.

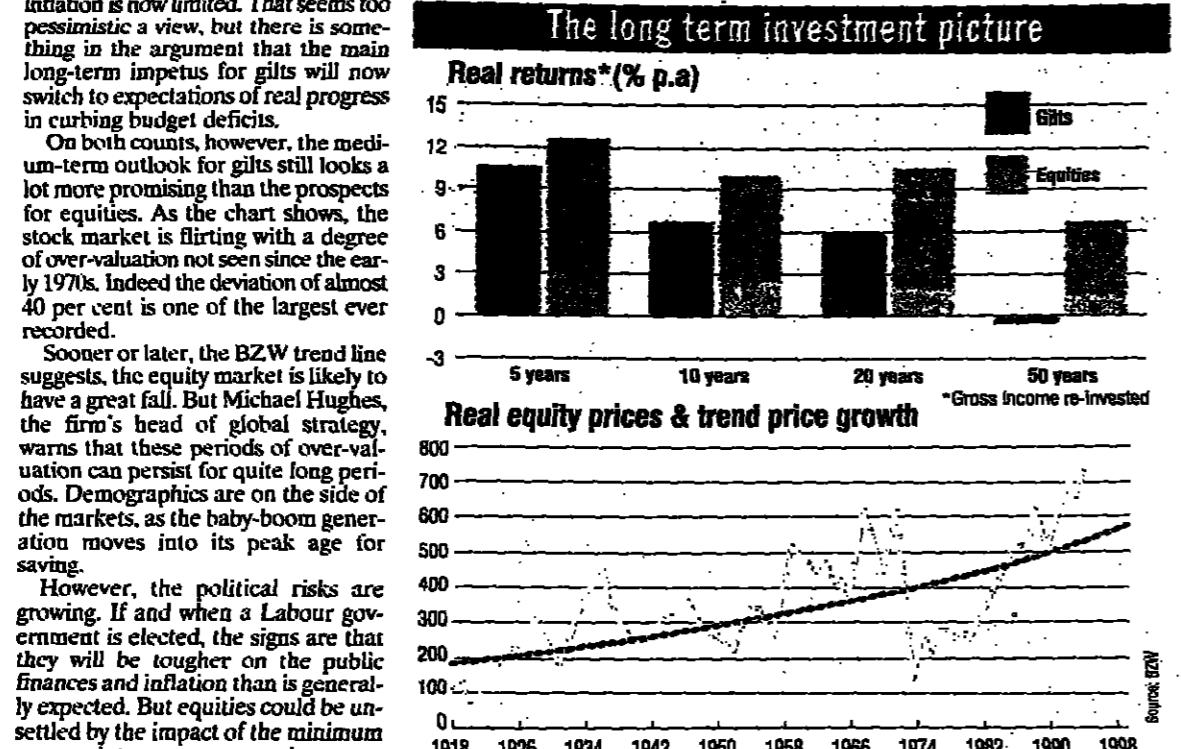
Just to make sure, direct marketing personnel from Granada were last night busily phoning Forte private

shareholders to try to persuade them it was not worth turning up. Will the shareholders be silenced? Watch this space.

The BBC World Service is seeking to recruit someone to produce a radio soap opera in Romania which will "increase understanding about business and privatisation among the general population".

The successful applicant would fly out to Bucharest and train a team of local writers and actors to create the series. The World Service has already successfully produced such soaps in other parts of the post-Communist world, such as a co-production with Radio Russia entitled *Dom 7, Podjed 4*, or "House 7, Entrance 4". That soap was intended to stimulate debate about the values of the wider business scene in Russia according to the Beeb.

Apparently the need for such a soap in Romania is urgent because the privatisation programme has failed to



Tomkins finalises Gates acquisition at £768m

MAGNUS GRIMOND

Tomkins, the American lawnmowers to British cakes conglomerate, has completed its long-delayed acquisition of the US Gates group at a price of \$1.16bn (£768m).

The deal, first announced in mid-December, had been held up by a technical hitch "unrelated to either Tomkins or the business", according to Greg

Hutchings, the British group's executive chairman. Denver-based Gates gives Tomkins the world's biggest manufacturer of power transmission belts and hose products for the automotive industry.

The terms of the acquisition involve the issue by Tomkins of \$696m (£461m) of perpetual convertible preference shares, yielding 6.7 per cent, and \$464m (£307m) in redeemable con-

vertible preference shares, yielding 5.25 per cent. Full conversion would involve the issue of ordinary shares equivalent to 15.7 per cent of Tomkins' existing ordinary capital.

The family trusts which control Gates have said they have "no current plan or intention" to sell the shares they receive as a result of the deal. Charles Gates, chairman, chief executive and president of Gates, has ac-

cepted an invitation to join the board of Tomkins as a non-executive director.

Mr Hutchings said yesterday the strategy would now be to develop the Gates business into new geographical areas, where there was growing demand for cars, trucks, computers and photocopiers - all products in which Gates' belts are used. The US group is already represented in Japan, South Korea and various

Latin American countries. The plan is to follow big manufacturers like Ford into developing areas like India and China.

Current investment plans would be maintained or possibly even increased. Mr Hutchings said: "With Tomkins' net cash pile currently standing at £300m and Gates' borrowings standing at £250m, the deal would not add to gearing."

The deal was broadly wel-

comed by analysts yesterday, with Tomkins' shares adding 1.5p to 281p. Martin Bomford of IBS described it as "fair and reasonable without looking stunningly attractive". He suggested there would not be much scope for further recovery in a business already making margins of 8 per cent. He calculated the exit multiple at 15, based on estimated profits of around \$110m for last year.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Adscene Group (I)	22.5m (11.5m)	2.67m (2.12m)	9.9p (8.6p)	3.5p (3p)
Blacksite Group (I)	6.88m (7.14m)	-1.15m (-2.02m)	-1.20 (2.02)	n/a (n/a)
Scotstv (I)	5.95m (5.51m)	-2.09m (0.92m)	-1.46p (0.21)	n/a (n/a)
Games Workshop Group (I)	19.5m (14.9m)	3.17m (2.47m)	8.6p (5.5p)	2p (1.5p)
Loftus (F)	29.1m (17.9m)	0.97m (0.17m)	12.1p (2.7p)	3.8p (-)
Property Trust (I)	1.14m (1.13m)	0.27m (0.25m)	1.4p (1.3p)	n/a (n/a)
Harry Ramsden's (F)	4.33m (3.72m)	1.15m (0.95m)	8p (4.2p)	5p (4.5p)
Wynn (I)	41.8m (29.8m)	2.03m (2.74m)	2.74p (1.57p)	1p (0.5p)

(I) - Final (F) - Interim (M) - Nine months

Greenalls joins ranks of top 100

JOHN SHEPHERD

Greenalls Group yesterday capped six years of radical change and an aggressive acquisition policy by joining the UK's corporate elite - becoming a constituent of the FTSE 100 index. The company replaces Forte, which last week lost its £2.9bn fight for independence against Granada.

Shares in Greenalls climbed

10.5p to 608.5p, valuing the group at £1.76bn. Greenalls' market value was the highest of a short-list of six - which included Mercury Asset Management and MEPC - at the close of dealings on the stock market yesterday.

Dealers are anticipating hectic trading in the company's shares in the next couple of weeks because FTSE 100 index tracker funds will need to hold the shares.

Peter Greenall, managing director and one of the last remaining family members at the pub and hotel group, said the elevation of the shares into

FTSE 100 was "recognition that we are at the top of our industry."

However, he said the goal of

seeing the shares into the top 100 was secondary to "having a dominant market position within the industry."

Greenalls was fast to adapt to changes in the industry in recent years, largely sparked by the controversial Beer Orders in 1989 that forced big brewers to sell thousands of pubs.

The company responded by withdrawing from brewing to concentrate on pub management, and almost simultaneously by dismantling its two tier share structure.

The share entrenchment, which considerably loosened the group's grip, enabled the company to use its equity to unleash a series of acquisitions. Two deals in particular have transformed the group. They were the purchases of Devonish the West Country pub group, and last year's £52.7m deal to buy Boddington, its main rival in the North West.

Separately, Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries cheered investors with a reasonably bullish trading statement at the annual shareholders meeting. Shares rose 5p to 596p.

An 7 page appointment section covering vital issues in accountancy, public sector finance and the legal profession.

See pages 13-16
17, 20-21
section two

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Quality Software shares continue dive

NIGEL COPE

Shares in Quality Software Products, the accountancy-software group, fell another 12.5p to 35.5p yesterday following a profit warning on Monday. The shares have lost half of their value in two days and stand below the 38p issue price when the company came to the stock market in 1993. QSP issued no fresh infor-

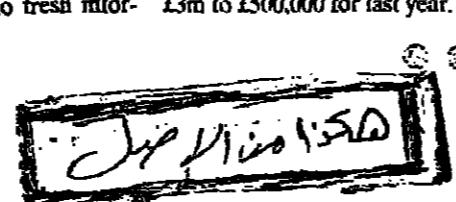
mation yesterday and no trades were recorded in the stock. The Gateshead-based company has blamed its problems on the delay of contracts which it had expected to be signed last year but which have been delayed. This will cut around £2.3m from profits. Further costs will be incurred as a result of staff rationalisation. Analysts have cut profit forecasts from £3m to £100,000 for last year.

Much of the re-organisation costs are associated with QSP's purchase of its US distributor Global Software last year. This was funded by a £14.7m rights issue at 535p per share. Global is based in North Carolina and linked up with QSP in 1994.

The relationship has proved

Fred McClenaghan, The West Lancs Project, 1 Westgate, Penylands, Skelmersdale, West Lancashire WN8 5LP.
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Drug test pair to take ITF to court

Tennis

Mats Wilander and Karel Novak said yesterday they would be taking legal action against the International Tennis Federation in the United States and London over allegations of drug abuse.

In a statement the two players accused the London-based ITF of smearing them by leaking "false" information, showing that they tested positive for cocaine at the French Open last year.

The test results were first reported last Sunday but had been kept quiet while the players appealed. "We have taken legal steps against ITF at the High Court in London. More legal action against ITF, their leaders and other officials can be expected in the United States," the players said.

"There is a scandal here. But it is not about drug abuse. Instead it is a scandal about ITF smearing two top athletes just as the accusations against them were to be unveiled as false."

The players claimed the ITF had informed them of the positive tests, but had not given them a fair chance to defend themselves. They alleged the ITF had refused to provide evidence on which the charges were based.

"The ITF ignored, in a shocking manner, the players' fundamental rights and caused their reputation enormous harm," added the players, who successfully underwent drug tests. The ITF has not commented.

Monica Seles pulled out of the doubles to concentrate on the singles at the Pan Pacific Open in Tokyo yesterday. She had entered the doubles with local favourite Kimiko Date, the world No 6.

Of concern to the tournament was a newspaper report from Melbourne that a caller had threatened Seles' life before she won the Australian Open. Police are investigating a threat.

Seles made no reference to the report in announcing at the last minute that she was pulling out of the doubles to protect her injured shoulder. A statement from Victoria police said they had been alerted to a security threat made against an unnamed player during the Australian Open and extra police had been assigned to tighten security.

Seles plays her first singles match today against Irina Spirlea, of Romania. In the first round yesterday afternoon focused on 15-year-old Martina Hingis' 6-3, 6-4 defeat of former world No 3 - now No 7 - Gabriela Sabatini. The Argentinian looked to be recovering as she took a 3-1 lead in the second set, but the Swiss player steadied and fought back to win.

WEEKEND FIXTURES AND POOLS FORECAST

FA Curling Premiership

1 Aerval v Country ...
2 Bannockburn v Stobes ...
3 Banchory v Dundee ...
4 Liverpool v Tottenham ...
5 Manchester City v QPR ...
6 Newcastle United v QPR ...
7 Southampton v Everton ...
8 West Ham v Nottingham Forest ...
9 Wimborne v Manchester United ...
Playing Sunday: Cheltenham v Middleborough.

Endurance Insurance League

10 Barroway v Westord ...
11 Grimsby v Derby ...
12 Huddersfield v Tranmere ...
13 Luton v Walsall v Wrexham ...
14 Leicester v Luton ...
15 Sheffield Utd v Oldham ...
16 Southend v Middlesbrough ...
17 Sunderland v Nottingham Forest ...
Playing Sunday: Cheltenham v Crystal Palace Norwich v Birmingham; Port Vale v Stoke; Reading v Nottingham.

Second Division

22 Blackpool v Luton ...
23 Bradford v Wigan ...
24 Bradford v Barnsley ...
25 Brighton v Fleetwood ...
26 Bristol City v Walsall ...
27 Chesterfield v Shrewsbury ...
28 Coventry v Bristol City ...
29 Doncaster Rovers v Cardiff ...
30 Hartlepool United v Wigan ...
31 Leyton Orient v Wrexham ...
32 Shrewsbury v Bristol City ...
33 Walsall v Chesterfield ...
Playing Sunday: Cheltenham v Crystal Palace Norwich v Birmingham; Port Vale v Stoke; Reading v Nottingham.

Third Division

22 Bury v Hartlepool ...
23 Bury v Hereford ...
24 Cambridge Utd v Grimsby ...
25 Cheltenham v Wrexham ...
26 Darlington v Leyton Orient ...
27 Hartlepool v Rochdale ...
28 Luton v Oldham ...
29 Macclesfield v Wrexham ...
30 Macclesfield v Wrexham ...
31 Shrewsbury v Bristol City ...
32 Stockport v Bristol City ...
33 Walsall v Chesterfield ...
Playing Sunday: Cheltenham v Crystal Palace Norwich v Birmingham; Port Vale v Stoke; Reading v Nottingham.

Fourth Division

22 Bury v Hartlepool ...
23 Bury v Hereford ...
24 Cambridge Utd v Grimsby ...
25 Cheltenham v Wrexham ...
26 Darlington v Leyton Orient ...
27 Hartlepool v Rochdale ...
28 Luton v Oldham ...
29 Macclesfield v Wrexham ...
30 Macclesfield v Wrexham ...
31 Shrewsbury v Bristol City ...
32 Stockport v Bristol City ...
33 Walsall v Chesterfield ...
Playing Sunday: Cheltenham v Crystal Palace Norwich v Birmingham; Port Vale v Stoke; Reading v Nottingham.

First Division

47 Aston v Cheltenham ...
48 Burnley v Middlesbrough ...
49 Crystal Palace v Birmingham ...
50 Coventry v Birmingham ...
51 Grimsby v Birmingham ...
52 Ipswich Town v Birmingham ...
53 Macclesfield v Birmingham ...
54 Middlesbrough v Birmingham ...
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sport

THE ENGLAND SUCCESSION: International experience seen as a prerequisite by the game's professionals. Clive White reports

Robson is players' choice for national coach

The Football Association may be still making up its mind, but those who make their living from the game appear to have made their choice for the next England coach. Bryan Robson, the Middlesbrough manager, had the most support when the *Independent* canvassed opinion among English players in the Premiership.

When the same cross-section was asked to put aside the claims of the young bucks – namely Messrs Robson, Keegan, Francis (Gerry), Hoddle and Wilkins – and select their outsider, there was a pronounced preference for Howard's way, with Leeds' Wilkinson and Sheffield United's Kendall drawing equally strong backing.

Robson may have ruled himself out – as have many of the other contenders – but if his arm can be twisted he would be the choice of Premiership footballers nationwide. More than half of the players we spoke to thought he was the best candidate.

The days of the Walter Winterbottoms, indeed, even more latterly, the Graham Taylors, are long past. Players nowadays, certainly international players, reserve their respect for those managers who have been there, seen it and done it. With 90 caps and experience in just about every major tournament in the world, the player they called Captain Marvel clearly qualifies on that score.

As Simon Barker, the Queen's Park Rangers midfielder, put it: "International players have big egos so you need a man in charge who could command their respect."

Wimbledon's Alan Kimble agreed. "In an open field I would choose Bryan Robson and that goes for the majority of my fellow professionals," he said. "We know what a tremendous player he was and although he is still in his early days as a manager, he has already been successful at Middlesbrough. He has international experience as a player and also as a coach alongside Venables."

Continuity was a big factor in Robson's favour with some players. "Bryan Robson fits the bill to my mind because he's already one step ahead of the rest having had two years working and learning alongside Venables," Kevin Richardson, the Coventry midfielder and former international, said. "He



Bryan Robson fits the bill because he's already one step ahead of the rest having had two years working and learning alongside Venables. He commands tremendous respect among players

Photograph: Empics

commands tremendous respect among players because of his track record, while his experience of man management at Middlesbrough will also be vital."

Nigel Spink, the Aston Villa goalkeeper, was another keen to see continuity maintained. "If

see Robson in harness with an older man, if not Venables then someone like Wilkinson, "We're lucky to have so many ready-made candidates for the job – even if some of them have started to put their clubs before country," Gary Charles, the

mon consent, Venables is still the right man for the job. I have not worked with enough people to confidently nominate anyone else. I'm surprised anyone would really want the job considering all the hype and pressure that goes with the territory. You would have to have the skin of a rhino to withstand the flak and that is not still around – at his best."

After Robson, the main support of players was for Glenn Hoddle, Gerry Francis and Kevin Keegan, with some backing for Ray Wilkins. Francis had the support of the former England captain, Stuart Pearce, even though the Forest full-back has never played under him. "He has the ideal qualities for the job," he said. "A former England skipper, he also has a terrific record in League management as well as the determination to

play the game the right way."

Someone who has played under Francis, the Queen's Park Rangers striker Bradley Allen, believed that at least could be persuaded to throw his hat into the ring. "I know he has said that he doesn't want the job, but Gerry is a very clever man."

"If England don't do well

next summer then it's a perfect situation for him. If he came in and took them to the World Cup he would be a hero. With the system he uses and the way he makes his teams so solid I'm sure he would do well. He is such a good tactician and secretly I think he would like the job. If he gets offered it at the right time I think he would take it."

Mark Draper, the Aston Villa playmaker, likened Keegan's qualities to those of Venables, and felt he had the all-round abilities for the job. "His playing

career both at home and abroad was exemplary," Draper said. "He's very much his own man and anyone who can guide the game for eight years and then pick up the reins again with such impact at Newcastle must be special."

BACKING FOR GERRY FRANCIS

"He has a terrific record in League management as well as the determination to play the game the right way – Stuart Pearce



John Moncur, the West Ham midfield player, backs Hoddle, his former manager at Swindon. Moncur said: "I've worked under Glenn and know how good he is. He has a great knowledge of the game and to be a top-class manager you need to have played at the top level. If Hoddle and the other main contenders were

to the semi-finals of the 1990 World Cup. There was some backing for both Ron Atkinson and David Pleat, while there were honourable mentions for Jim Smith, Jack Charlton and Kenny Dalglish.

Peter Fear, Wimbledon's Under-21 international, said: "Ron Atkinson is my choice. He

has got a lot of character and he would give the team some personality. He is a manager who does his own thing and has a bit of a laugh."

Perhaps the most surprising name to be mentioned was that of George Graham. Some London players expressed support for the former Arsenal manager, despite the fact that he is Scottish and *persona non grata* with the Football Association at the moment.

Robbie Earle, the Wimbledon midfielder, said: "He showed down the years with Arsenal what he is and his record stands alongside anybody's. I know he's had his problems in the last year but let's face it, so has Jerry. I think George would quite fancy the challenge and as a character he would be able to take the pressure that goes with it."

Fans are roused by home run

South Africa hope emotional home support will help to carry them past Ghana in their African Nations Cup semi-final in Johannesburg today.

The tournament may have been beset by poor attendances but the chance of seeing the home team reach the showpiece of their first finals tournament is expected to attract a capacity 75,000 crowd to Soccer City.

That semi is being billed as the "premature final", with Tunisia and the high-scoring Zambia, who dispute the other place in the final earlier in the day in Durban being dismissed as underdogs.

South Africa won a dramatic quarter-final against Algeria on Saturday, a match which raised public interest in the tournament and heightened the prospect of another sporting triumph to go with the nation's "rugby union" success. "Everything is working well for us. Forward we go, backwards never," midfielder John Moshoeu said.

Ghana, the pre-tournament favourites, will have their captain Abedi Pele back in the starting line-up. He was carried off during Sunday's quarter-final victory over Zaire, but an X-ray revealed no crack or break in his swollen ankle. Ghana's pursuit of a record fifth Nations Cup title was also set to be boosted by the return of the striker Yaw Preko, who missed their three previous matches through injury.

South Africa will be without the Leeds United forward Phil Masinga, who will be serving a one-match suspension after receiving his second caution of the tournament on Saturday. South Africa's coach, Clive Barker, said he would be replaced by Shaun Bartlett.

Derby snap up Powell

PHIL SHAW

Bromwich Albion after the clubs agreed a £150,000 fee.

Fry also failed in a £1m bid for Marcus Stewart, the 18-goal Bristol Rovers striker. Rovers vice-chairman, Geoff Dunford, said Fry was "living in fantasy land" if he hoped to land Stewart for under £2m. The Birmingham manager retorted that Dunford was himself in "cloud cuckoo land", and observed pointedly that Stewart would be out of contract in the summer.

On their way out of West Brom yesterday was Mike Phelan, the former Manchester United and England player, who has rejoined Norwich, where he will assist with coaching, and the striker James McCue, who signed for Partick Thistle.

Blackburn have taken the unusual step of issuing a statement criticising "inaccurate and unfounded" media reports which suggested that David Bates had walked out on the champions and was being forced to

train with the junior players.

Robert Coar, Blackburn's chairman, said that Bates, a transfer target for Newcastle, trained normally with the first-team squad yesterday.

The Football Association confirmed yesterday that its disciplinary committee would study video evidence of last week's Premiership match between West Ham and Manchester United before deciding whether to ask the referee, Barnsley's Stephen Lodge, to reconsider his dismissal of United's Nicky Butt.

Representatives of Uefa, Europe's football governing body, will meet officials of the European Commission in Brussels tomorrow to discuss the implications of the Jean-Marc Bosman case. The European Court of Justice ruled last month that Uefa's transfer-fee rules and player-nationality restrictions violated European Union law regarding the free movement of workers.

Yorke keeps level head

Despite his brush with the law at the weekend Neil Ruddock hopes to be in the Liverpool line-up that will try to deny Dwight Yorke his 50th goal for Aston Villa in tonight's key Premiership game.

Ruddock was arrested by police on Sunday night – and released without charge – after his £57,000 Porsche overturned, but he looks to have convinced Roy Evans, the Liverpool manager, that he should retain his place at Villa Park.

Leeds hope that Tony Dorigo (hamstring) and Richard Johnson (knee) will be fit to return at Nottingham Forest with David Wetherall and Paul Dumitrescu as mark Mark Ford and Lee Chapman.

Forest, unbeaten at home, lack their captain, Stuart Pearce, who is struggling with

a strain suffered during England's recent get-together.

Alan Ball returns to the

team for the first time since he left Southampton seven months ago – and the build-up has been far from smooth with his Manchester City squad changing hotels after a row.

Gordon Watson wins a recall

alongside Neil Shipperley for

Southampton and Mark Wal-

ters, faces his former Anfield

colleague Nigel Clough, who is

making his City debut.

West Ham have failed to re-

ceive work permit clearances for

the Croatian defender Slaven

Bilic and the Romanian Ilie

Dumitrescu in time for the vis-

it of Coventry. The Sky Blues

hope that midfielder Kevin

Richardson will shrug off a

knee injury. Gordon Strachan

and Willie Boland stand by.

Sparta's debts raise doubts for future

Sparta Prague, the Czech league champions, are in no danger of going bankrupt despite their current financial crisis.

General Motors, Sparta's main sponsor, said yesterday: "The 103-year-old club, who were champions of the former Czechoslovakia 19 times and have won both championships of the new Republic, built up

debts to finance the construction of their 22,000 all-seat Letna ground.

However, Andrej Barcak,

the General Motors regional director for central and eastern Europe, said that speculation

about bankruptcy, sparked by

comments from the club's main creditor, Investec's Postovni

Banka, was premature.

"Either the banks will make

a deal or an interested partner

will make a deal – there are in-

dications of this from Sparta and

Investec Banka," Barcak said.

"The value of the stadium, plus

assets they have in terms of play-

ers, etc, are far higher than their

debts. Their problem is one of

cash flow," Sparta officials were

unavailable for comment.

Apart from debts to the lo-

cal telephone company, which

recently cut all Sparta's lines, the

club's main financial headache

is its 300m Czech crowns

(\$7.3m) loan from Investec

Banka to build its new stadium.

Last week the bank indicat-

ed that bankruptcy was a pos-

sibility but said it did not want

to start the process.

SPORT

INDEPENDENT
QUESTIONS
OF
SPORT

£40,000 to be won

See Page 22

FRENCH CORNERSTONE

Califano targets Scots' pack

FA plays hard to get over England job

GLENN MOORE
Football Correspondent

There was no sign of white smoke rising above Lancaster Gate yesterday. Indeed, there was not much indication of anything as the Football Association attempted to begin its quest for a new leader in greater secrecy than the Vatican.

"They met for 90 minutes and they had tea, coffee and sandwiches. That is all I can tell you," an FA spokesman said of the first step in finding a new national coach. Even that sounded as if he was hiding something. No mention of cakewalk, when Jimmy Armfield, the FA's Coachfinder General, has a noted sweet tooth? Surely not.

The news black-out is unlikely to last for long but, even now, it is not hard to deduce the FA's next move. It is likely to involve Armfield, who was involved with Terry Venables' selection two years ago, heading North-east to see if Bryan Robson and Kevin Keegan are serious in their lack of interest.

Gerry Francis, at Tottenham, will also get a call but it is Robson who remains the FA's favoured choice. He is held in high regard by Venables, who brought the Middlesbrough manager into the England squad as coach. He has the players' respect. He is also likely to be easier to prise away from

Middlesbrough than Keegan is from Newcastle.

Keegan's emotional attachment to St James' Park, and the prospect of competing in the Champions' League next season, is likely to keep him at Newcastle even if Sir John Hall was prepared to release him from his lengthy contract, which he would only do with great reluctance.

Steve Gibson, the Middlesbrough chairman, is equally keen to retain his manager. But Robson has only been associated with the club for 21 months, and is believed to have a release clause in the event of England calling.

However, his agreement is not a foregone conclusion. Robson's recent interest in the Brazilians Branco and Roberto Carlos, suggested Middlesbrough's immediate future was of greater concern to him than England's.

There is the possibility of a compromise, and it is that which will have occupied much of yesterday's meeting of the international sub-committee because it revolves around Venables.

At least one of the sub-committee's five members — Graham Kelly, the FA's chief executive, Sir Bert Millichip, the FA's chairman, Noel White (Liverpool), Keith Wiseman (Southampton) and Chris Willcox (Gloucester FA) — is understood to be in the FA's anti-Venables faction, but he is likely to be in the minority.

Venables is resigning because he feels the international com-

mittee's lukewarm support could turn icy by the time his autumn court case with Alan Sugar heats up. Robson is hesitating over the England job because he feels a loyalty to Middlesbrough and lacks experience.

The compromise solution would be to give Robson the job on a part-time basis — and restore Venables when his court case is over. Robson would then take over for good after the 1998 World Cup.

There is one obvious danger — the court case, or the long-awaited, Teddy Sheringham transfer inquiry, may go so badly against Venables that he is considered unemployable.

If Arfield's discussions with Robson go well, the sub-committee's next meeting, in two to three weeks, may have nothing more taxing to do than arrange a formal interview. If they go badly, discussion will turn to further candidates — Gerry Francis (who, of all those mentioned, may be serious in saying he would not want the hassle of the job), Frank Clark, Glenn Hodde or Howard Wilkinson. It may even cast its net further afield and consider a foreign coach.

The most likely candidate remains the man who wore the Cross of St George so boldly during his playing career: it is probably etched into his scar tissue. Would Bryan Robson really turn down his country in its hour of need? We may soon find out.

Players' choice, page 22

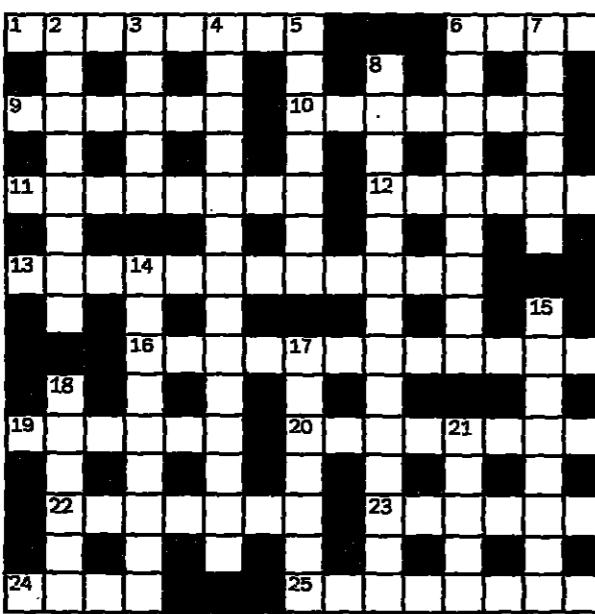
THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD
in association with



No. 297. Wednesday 31 January

By Aquila

Yesterday's Solution



ACROSS

- Crop as a means of saving time (5,5)
- Wife battered in front of the kids? (4)
- Alpine car in a smash (6)
- Cut in salary makes one so hysterical (7)
- Desert beetle springs here (8)
- Perceptive sixth sense is about energy (6)
- Frogman, perhaps, with sufficient interval — breaking tin into amusing little pieces (12)
- Pronounced disdainful customs of people growing? (12)
- Stops butterflies (6)

DOWN

- Living once, set about becoming most active (8)
- Bright red vehicle approaching pit (7)
- More shed than garage, within? (6)
- A duck-egg blue (4)
- Potential wooers, according to Rowley (8)
- Overture of wind instrument with end key broken off (8)
- Money one might charge on safari (5)
- Personal property (14)
- Apt to get drunk, Othello retired to bar (7)

Win a Weekend Break or a case of Bombardier Premium Bitter

CALL 0891 311 017

When you have the answers to the first three clues across AND the first three clues down phone 0891 311 017 and leave your answers with your name and daytime telephone number by midnight tonight. Each day there is a case of Charles Wells Bombardier Premium Bitter to win. PLUS from all entries for the week a winner will be selected for a Weekend for two in a Charles Wells Country Hotel. Call 0891 311 017 to enter. The draw will be made at 10pm on the 31st January. There will be 49 winners in all other times. Winners will be selected at random from all correct entries received. No cash alternative. Normal Newspaper Publishing rules apply. Editor's decision is final. Winners' names can be obtained by sending an SAE to — Charles Wells Crossword, Unit A, Bowe House, St Peters Road, Maidenhead SL6 7QU

Cambridge's recovery leaves the Navy feeling blue



Mike Meredith takes a short corner for Cambridge University in their match against the Royal Navy yesterday. Meredith, a former Oxford Blue, set up the equaliser when he won a penalty stroke in the second half. The university went on to win 3-1. Report, page 23; photograph: David Ashdown

Howley joins Welsh bodyguards

Rugby Union

STEVE BALE

Robert Howley, the Bridgend scrum-half coveted by Saracens was yesterday chosen to make his Wales debut against England on Saturday — a selection that may well herald the end to the London club's hope of pairing Howley next season with Michael Lynagh.

The 25-year-old new cap wishes to focus his thoughts only on what will await him at Twickenham and certainly not on the illustrious Wallaby. So enquires on the subject of Saracens, for whom he has signed a registration form, after yesterday's announcement at Cardiff Arms Park elicited no response.

However, Howley and the 19-year-old centre Leigh Davies are poised to become the next players to join the Welsh Rugby Union as paid development officers, thereby effectively placing them on funding contracts and swelling the burgeoning number who, by their WRU commitment, would be significant assets for the union in the worst event of a big club break-away.

Howley and Davies will join the Wales captain, Jonathan Humphreys, together with Justin Thomas and Derwyn Jones of yesterday's team and Gareth Thomas from the replacements, not forgetting a certain Jonathan Davies, who is recovering from a knee operation.

In an ideal world Kevin Bowning, the coach, would gladly have his full team under contract.

The team to face England contain 13 of those who almost slipped a substantial lead against Italy a fortnight ago, Howley's snappier pass and superior strength winning him the scrum-half place from Andy Moore and a fit-again Nigel Davies displacing Matthew Winfield at inside centre, a position regarded as critically influential by Bowning.

Howley was also considered outside-half, though in fact selection had already been decided by the time Neil Jenkins proved his fitness by participating in Monday night's physical-conditioning session against Wales Under-21s. Bowning did not accept that

hope they'll be looking out for me and I'll be able to take some of the attention off Arwel."

The scrum-half's elevation is a case of faith moving mountains. Howley came home from the Welsh tour of southern Africa in 1993 with a knee injury which persisted through conventional treatments until he consulted a faith healer as a last resort and was cured. Alleluia!

There have been times in recent years when Welsh rugby has seemed in need of the same.

WALES (v England, Twickenham, 3 February): J Thomas; E Evans (both Llanelli), R Jones (Newport), M Williams (Llanelli), A Thomas (Bristol), R Howley (Bridgend), A Lewis, J Humphreys (both Cardiff, capt.), D Davies, Gareth Lewis (Cardiff), D Price, E Price, H Taylor (all Cardiff), G Jones (Llanelli), Replacements: G Thomas (Bridgend), N Jenkins (Pembrey), A Moore, L Musgrove (both Cardiff), G Jenkins (Swansea), S Williams (Wrexham).

Bailey starts mind games with attack on Christie

Athletics

MIKE ROWBOTTOM

Donovan Bailey, who succeeded Linford Christie as world 100 metres champion, yesterday accused the Briton of faking injury in last year's final. The Canadian added that Christie was bluffing when he said he would not defend his Olympic title in Atlanta this summer.

After finishing sixth behind Bailey in Gothenburg, Christie lay face down on the track and received ice-pack treatment for a hamstring injury which appeared to have happened in the semi-final.

But Bailey, who took the title in 9.73sec, insisted: "There was absolutely no one injured in the final in Gothenburg. Watch it over and over again — no one in that race was hurt. If Linford had a hamstring injury, it was healed the next day. He was in the athletes' village and ready to run in the relay if needed."

Bailey pointed out that Christie beat him in Zurich 10 days later in 10.03. "That answers the question," he said. "I've had hamstring injuries before, and it takes at least a couple of weeks to be back at full speed — unless you have an amazing out-of-this-world physiotherapist."

But the 28-year-old who, like

Christie, was born in Jamaica, is confident his 35-year-old British rival will be in Atlanta for a race which he believes could be "the biggest race in history" — assuming everyone is fit.

"I think Linford is bluffing the media," he said. "I think he'll run the Olympics. I certainly don't think he's too old — if you are running 10 seconds flat, as he is now, you could be 85 and still compete. As any of the people I am competing with, he would be very careful about what he is saying."

"There is no secret to what happened with Linford. He was injured in the final, and he went away the next day to get excellent treatment to which he responded very well."

While being treated outside Zurich by the same medical specialist who operated on Sally Gunnell's troublesome heel in September last year, Christie had a scan which showed he was also suffering from knee cartilage problems.

The British Athletic Federation spokesman, Tony Ward, said: "These remarks are not credible. They also reflect unfairly on our medical team, who treated Linford in Gothenburg."

The remarks were also strongly denied by Sue Barrett, Christie's agent at his management company, Nuff Respect. "Donovan won the title when Linford was not fully fit. But he

should remember how Linford won in the Barcelona Olympics when Carl Lewis wasn't running the individual event. Things like that happen. It doesn't mean you can start talking rubbish about your fellow competitors. He should be very careful about what he is saying."

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"As far as competing in the Olympics goes," Barrett continued, "Donovan obviously knows Linford's mind better than he does himself because no decision has been made yet."

Bailey, who remained genial — if a little bemused — throughout his audience with the massed media, denied that he saw Christie as the main threat

to the sprints.

And he acknowledged that Christie was a serious contender. "I think some of the other sprinters have not been tough enough mentally to beat him," he said. "He is a very confident man. But I am physically strong and mentally I'm even tougher."

Bailey's mind-games technique certainly appears in good shape as summer approaches.



Donovan Bailey, the 100 metres world champion, speaks his mind in London yesterday

Photograph: Peter Jay

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